

# Horizon

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

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LETTER FROM A SOLDIER

*by* GORONWY REES

REFLECTIONS ON WRITING

*by* HENRY MILLER

A LOVE STORY

*by* ELIZABETH BOWEN

A DESPISED LIBERAL

*by* F. MACEachRAN

I LIVE ON MY WITS

*by* ALFRED PERLÈS

POEMS *by* W. H. AUDEN *and* STEPHEN SPENDER

LETTER FROM AMERICA *by* LOUIS MACNEICE

THE WORKS OF B. TRAVEN *by* A. CALDER-MARSHALL

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MONTHLY: ONE SHILLING NET

JULY

VOL. 1, No. 7

1940

***Edited by Cyril Connolly***

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# HORIZON

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

*Vol. I. No. 7. July 1940*

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*The editorial and publishing offices of HORIZON are at  
6 Selwyn House, Lansdowne Terrace, W.C.1.—Six months'  
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# AMERICAN LETTER

DEAR STEPHEN;

Just had your letter. I never wrote you my little synopsis of what America thinks about the war as I don't know what America thinks and, if I did, I couldn't synopt it. It is a truism, of course, that nearly all Americans want to stay out of it just as people want the weather to be fine; they know, however, that war is as arbitrary as weather and that, whether Mahomet wants it or not, this is a world where the mountains come knocking at his door. I met one professor who thought that if the Pope and Roosevelt got together they could fix up everything beautifully. On the whole, however, the most lively comments I have heard were from non-Americans. From Liam O'Flaherty, for instance, who spent a lunch-hour in New York lambasting Ralph Bates (Bates, as you probably know, outraged his old comrades by denouncing the Russo-German pact and the Soviet invasion of Finland). O'Flaherty, who, like many Irish revolutionaries, wears a veneer of would-be sense over a welter of violent, anarchic impulse, said the Russo-German pact was one of the best things that had ever happened; it had cleared the Pinks out of politics.

When we landed in New York, there was ice on the quays and the sky was a candid blue like the eyes of a frigid woman. New York—or, at least, Manhattan—is not only remote from Europe, it is remote from the rest of America. A paradise for escapists—provided they have money. Nickel after nickel into slot after slot, ice-cube after ice-cube into drink after drink, cataracts of peanuts and a labyrinth of lights, chromium, glass, reinforced concrete, every so often a shop being picketed and nobody caring, salacious ads., window-dressing virtuosity, queues in the cold for a doss-house in the Bowery, the electric eels in the Battery aquarium lighting up crimson bulbs, the black church moored at the end of Wall Street—a miniature doom, shoes being shined in every gap in hustle and the ambulance cars screaming. My second night on shore I dreamed I was on a steamer, one among other steamers running amok, a Gaderene stampede through a yellow boiling sea that was full of pylons, all the boats converging, bound to collide; for some reason I liked it.

Last week I flew from New York to Chicago and back. Much of the American landscape being dull from the train, I was astonished by its elegance from the air. Elegance is the word for it—enormous plains of beautifully inlaid rectangles, the grain running different ways, walnut, satinwood or oatcake, the whole of it tortoise-shelled with copses and shadows of clouds; here and there were little lakes nailed down on the top of the ground like strips of canvas; khaki or bile-green rivers; the cities a mere encrustation limpeted on to a sublimely indifferent continent. On American Airlines they pet you and pamper you, give you scrambled eggs among the clouds, and strawberries and cream, and tell you statistics, but you cannot, with this endless land below you, avoid a beautiful feeling of futility, of fresh clean scepticism about humanity in general; the elections of Republicans and Democrats, the squabbles of the



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A. F. L. and the C. I. O. dwindle to a lottery in an ant heap; even if there were war down there on the plains of Indiana, it would just be one more ingredient in the pattern of a sliding map.

This thought of the irrelevance of one part of life to another reminds me of Auden's poem, 'Musée des Beaux Arts'. I don't know that I can tell you where Auden is getting to, but it seems to me he has made this important discovery—that life is false to formula. I hear people are still fussing in England about the ethics of his migration to America. Why bother? The explanation he gave me seems reasonable enough—that an artist ought either to live where he has live roots or where he has no roots at all; that in England to-day the artist feels essentially lonely, twisted in dying roots, always in opposition to a group; that in America he is just as lonely, but so, says Auden, is everybody else; with 140 million lonelies milling around him he need not waste his time either in conforming or rebelling. Whether Americans would agree with this account of their country or not, the argument is valid for Auden. It is no question of *il gran rifiuto*; he feels he can work better here than in Europe, and that is all there is to it.

Speaking for myself, I must say that at the moment I prefer being in America to being in England. Over here, as in England, there has been a great split on the Left and the high-minded keep on throwing mud at each other. Whether the intelligentsia at the moment can directly affect public affairs to any extent seems to me doubtful. What they ought to do is reassess their position *as intellectuals*; it is worth while remembering that there are more than the two alternatives of the Ivory Tower and the political tub. If you come to analyse it, public-mindedness itself can be a form of escapism. I don't think for a moment that we should go all private; what I do think is that we have been much too naïve about politics. Perhaps we all need a dose of the desert and perhaps that is just what we shall get, whether we want it or not.

There is a theory that when one gets over here one can see things in perspective; I don't find that myself, am still desperately out of focus. The trouble is—and, of course, this is a truism—that life can't be dissociated from value. It's no good being a neo-Epicurean; the pig's paradise is only open to pigs. Man is a political animal, unfortunately, and one can't live either in a sty or a 'plane for ever.

LOUIS MACNEICE

*Ithaca, New York.*

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*To the Editor*

DEAR SIR,

Mr. Richards scored his point in our correspondence on the Boys' Weeklies last month . . . and spoiled his reply with gratuitous invective. Despite the paper shortage, I hope you will allow me to reply to his slanderous hint that I may be 'an unsuccessful scribe whose way to the editorial sanctum is barred'. Far from this being the case, the editorial article in the May *Writer* described me as 'the most successful free-lance journalist in this country'. This sets me blushing, but perhaps Mr. Richards' face is also red.

*Haslemere, Surrey.*

HAROLD A. ALBERT



## LETTER FROM A SOLDIER

IN your Comment in the May number of *Horizon*, you say that 'War is the enemy of creative activity and writers and painters are right and wise to ignore it.' I quote this phrase because, as I think you will agree, it expresses very clearly your attitude to the war, and summarizes the conclusion of an argument which, in different forms, has appeared in almost all your monthly Comments in *Horizon*. May I say why I disagree, though a mind numbed by soldiering is hardly capable of formulating an idea or phrasing a sentence.

Firstly, may I suggest that you yourself find it difficult to practise what you preach. Your monthly Comment is, indeed, chiefly remarkable for this: that each month, while urging writers to ignore the war, you cannot avoid the subject yourself. The war, indeed, in its relation to the artist, is the one subject you discuss, at the same time insisting that the writer should not allow the war to obtrude upon his consciousness or his work. If your own premises are granted, you are making difficulties and problems where none exist. Moreover, if your conclusion is correct, that it is wise and right to ignore the war, your constant preoccupation with the forbidden subject can only be described as an obsessive activity—you return to it with the regularity of a dipsomaniac returning to the bottle or a neurotic to a guilty conscience. Why, in a journal whose purpose it is to assist artists in exercising their art and in ignoring the war, don't you devote yourself to exploring the 'deeper emotional levels' or discussing some modern improvements in the weapons of technique (a year ago you would have said 'methods' and not 'weapons')?

The war will not be ignored: it is your guilty conscience, and your obsession is an unconscious profession of disbelief in the view you profess to hold. But I don't think it is very important that you find it impossible to ignore the war; and perhaps you will say I am inferring too much from your Comments, which are designed to give topicality (should I

say reality?) to a review which otherwise soars above the here and the now. But it is important that others should not adopt the view you expound: by following them writers may complete their decline into the impotence which you deplore, while they banish the soldier into a spiritual as well as a military No Man's Land.

While asking writers to ignore the war, you at the same time implicitly claim that it is a just war; even more, a war on whose result the continued activity of the artist may depend. They (the artists) must also realize that their liberty and security are altogether threatened, that Fascism is against *them*. That is, the war they should ignore is being fought in part for *them*; in some ways most of all for them. For the *homme moyen sensuel* will find ways to exist even under Fascism, though he may dislike it; even in Nazi Germany there are Hermanns and Dorotheas enjoying an obscure happiness. But for the artist, also the saint, Fascism has no room, except as martyrs or apostates. So you say, in effect, to the artists: let the British and the French soldiers protect you, but ignore them while they die for you and wait till they have killed the ogre that threatens. The artist, it appears, is not even a neutral in this war: he merely does not recognize its existence.

I am the last to ask, or wish, that the writer should lay down his pen and take up arms; and I believe that the people of this country are too wise to make any such demand. It implies as great a misconception of the artist's function, an equal contempt, as to ask, or believe it possible, that he should ignore the war. Yet the soldier has the right, in return for his blood and his life and his despair, for the crimes he must take on himself, to ask that those most qualified, by their sensibility, by their more lucid perception of values, by their release from belligerence, should comprehend, analyse, illuminate, commemorate, his sacrifice and his suffering and the horror to which he is condemned to understand and reveal that even in war he is a human being and not a brute too ignoble for the artist's notice; most of all he has the right to ask this because the values which he, poor devil, dimly feels that he is called upon to defend are those without which the artist cannot live, and because



the soldier now will fight for his dim comprehension as no men ever fought before. A million men, and more, will die and the artist will live and create; and apparently he is to accept the fruit of this sacrifice as a free gift and acknowledge no responsibility to the giver.

I believe that the soldier has the right to ask that responsibility should be acknowledged; in doing so he would merely repeat, with greater intensity, the demand which every wealthy society makes on those who are their spiritual legislators. And even if, in the end, the artist could only reject, oppose, condemn the war, in the light of his understanding, his responsibility would be discharged. You have never really understood the nature of that responsibility, which obsessed so many of us in the years of the Popular Front; largely I think because it is associated in your mind with political beliefs and methods for which you have, rightly, no sympathy and because it has been stated so often and so blatantly in crude and distorted forms, and though on occasions you made concessions to the fashionable demand that writers must be politicians, I think that, when the war came, you seized the opportunity to proclaim that so inconceivable and uncontrollable an event made it clear that the artist could not be responsible and should hasten to disown the unfortunate obligations he had incurred. But the horror of an event does not lessen but increases an artist's responsibility. I do not mean that an artist must commit himself to politics or to any kind of overt social activity or to any particular set of political beliefs; he may be as reactionary as Balzac, as anti-social as Rimbaud, as non-political as Keats. Nor does his responsibility forbid, in the part of the artist, a voluntary isolation from Society, a retreat to the desert, or that prolonged silence in which the imagination fructifies. It does imply, while imposing no restraint on forms of expression or even the most ambiguous machinery of mythology, or fantasy or imagery, that the content of the artist's imagination should be the reality of his time, so that, if an artist followed your direction to explore 'the deeper levels of emotion', it would be precisely that reality he would explore; the epic of such an exploration is *Le Recherche du Temps Perdu* and its climax *Le Temps Retrouvé*.

You will see that this demand is, from the point of view of the artist, in no way revolutionary; it is rather a demand for the restoration of the classical, normal relation between the artist and the public; under existing conditions it is revolutionary because it can only be satisfied by the creation of a stable society.

The soldier as well as the artist has an interest in establishing this classical relation. The complement of your advice that the artist should ignore the war is that the soldier who must die that the artist may live, will find no voice which may speak for him what he wishes all the world to know, even more, no imagination that may illuminate for him the experience he knows but cannot comprehend. Banished into such desolation, he is to understand that his tragedy, which is the tragedy of Europe, is no concern of those who alone can give it lucidity and form; submerged in the deeper levels of emotion, the artist cannot conceal himself with so superficial a phenomenon as war, though of course, he is intensely interested in the result. He is the submarine which will only leave the ocean floor when the surface battle is over. The soldier must again understand that his world, the world of war, and the world of the artist are non-communicating; while the soldier manipulates the weapons of war, its master and its victim, the artist blissfully sharpens the weapons of technique. If, in the attempt to preserve the possibility of a culture and a civilization, the soldier must endure every material and moral evil, his struggle is to find no response and no understanding in the minds of those whom he will save. His enormous sacrifice will have no interest for those who alone are worthy and capable of communicating it; his expense of spirit and blood, his patience and endurance, his dim confused consciousness of their significance, will speak and be spoken of only in the stale rhetoric of politicians and the falsehoods of war correspondents. And if he searches in the work of the artist for some clear image of his suffering, or even for the consciousness that he suffers, and why, and to what purpose, his unspoken desire will be unsatisfied. No voice will break the terrible silence of the soldier, while he cannot break himself; he has no voice, he has only a rifle. If this should



happen, do not be surprised if the artist is without honour; for God's sake never complain, as I have seen *Horizon* complain, that the artist does not receive his due from society. Why should he? for on his part he acknowledges none.

I think that, in the end, your error is due to a misconception as much of war as of art. You write: 'War is the enemy of creative activity'. But the artist is no more threatened by the war than by the society from which it springs; in some ways less, for neither you nor I would wish to insult the artist by equating his creative activity with his physical safety. The war is not some obscene intruder on an idyllic scene in which the artist once happily flourished; it is the continuation of social processes in new and more violent forms and, as Proust once showed, contains and develops all those elements which have made it inevitable. But for the artist, if he wishes to satisfy the demands imposed upon him, the war has this value; there is no longer any possibility of escape, except by subduing it to the proportions of art, from the horror of the world in which it is his fate to have been born, that all at length is plain; and it is his duty to show that even in war humanity may be crucified but does not die. I do not know if there are artists alive who can achieve this triumph, but if there are, I am certain that they will see in the war, as artists once saw in the crucifixion of Christ, not one more squalid incident in the interminable suicide of humanity, but tragic and terrible birth.

With the best wishes for the future of *Horizon*.

GORONWY REES

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*We consider this article of sufficient importance to take the place of 'Comment' in this number. The Editorial Reply is on page 532.*

## HENRY MILLER

# REFLECTIONS ON WRITING<sup>1</sup>

KNUT HAMSON once said, in response to a questionnaire that he wrote to kill time. I think that even if he were sincere in stating it thus he was deluding himself. Writing, like life itself, is a voyage of discovery. The adventure is a metaphysical one: it is a way of approaching life indirectly, of acquiring a total rather than a partial view of the universe. The writer lives between the upper and lower worlds: he takes the path in order eventually to become that path himself.

I began in absolute chaos and darkness, in a bog or swamp of ideas and emotions and experiences. Even now I do not consider myself a writer, in the ordinary sense of the word. I am a man telling the story of his life, a process which appears more and more inexhaustible as I go on. Like the world-evolution, it is endless. It is a turning inside out, voyaging through  $\infty$  dimensions, with the result that somewhere along the way one discovers that what one has to tell is not nearly so important as the telling itself. It is this quality about all art which gives it a metaphysical hue, which lifts it out of time and space and centres or integrates it to the whole cosmic process. It is this about art which is 'therapeutic' in significance, purposelessness, infinitude.

From the very beginning almost I was deeply aware that there is no goal. I never hope to embrace the whole, but merely to give in each separate fragment, each work, the feeling of the whole, more and more of the whole as I go on because I am digging deeper and deeper into life, digging deeper and deeper into past and future. With the endless burrowing a certitude develops which is greater than faith or belief. I become more and more indifferent to my fate, as writer, and more and more certain of my destiny, as man.

<sup>1</sup> Written expressly for Huntington Cairns.



I began by assiduously examining the style and technique of those whom I once admired and worshipped: Nietzsche, Dostoevski, Hamsun, even Thomas Mann, whom to-day I discard as being a skilful fabricator, a brick-maker, an inspired jackass or draught-horse. I imitated every style, in the hope of finding the clue to the gnawing secret of how to write. Finally I came to a dead end, to a despair and desperation which few men have known, because there was no divorce between myself as writer and myself as man: to fail as a writer meant to fail as a man. And I failed. I realized that there was nothing—less than nothing—a minus quantity. It was at this point, in the midst of the dead Sargasso Sea, so to speak, that I really began to write. I began from scratch, throwing everything overboard, even those whom I most loved. Immediately I heard my own voice I was enchanted: the fact that it was a separate, distinct, unique voice sustained me. It didn't matter to me if what I wrote should be considered bad. Good and bad dropped out of my vocabulary, I jumped with two feet into the realm of æsthetics, the non-moral, non-ethical, non-utilitarian realm of art. My life itself became a work of art. I had found a voice, I was whole again. The experience was very much like what we read of in connection with the lives of Zen initiates. My huge failure was like the recapitulation of the experience of the race: I had to grow foul with knowledge, realize the futility of everything, smash everything, grow desperate, then humble, then sponge myself off the slate, as it were, in order to recover my authenticity. I had to arrive at the brink and then take a leap into the dark.

I talk now about Reality, but I know there is no getting at it, leastwise by writing. I learn less and realize more: I learn in some different, more subterranean way. I acquire more and more the gift of immediacy. I am developing the ability to perceive, apprehend, analyse, synthesize, categorize, inform, articulate—all at once. The structural element of things reveals itself more readily to my eye. I eschew all clear-cut interpretations: with increasing simplification the mystery heightens. What I know tends to become more and more unstatable. I live in certitude, a certitude which is not dependent upon proofs or faith. I live completely for myself,

without the least egotism or selfishness. I am living out my share of life and thus abetting the scheme of things. I further the development, the enrichment, the evolution and the devolution of the cosmos, every day in every way. I give all I have to give, voluntarily, and take as much as I can possibly ingest. I am a prince and a pirate at the same time. I am the equals sign, the spiritual counterpart of the sign Libra which was wedged into the original Zodiac by separating Virgo from Scorpio. I find that there is plenty of room in the world for everybody—great interspatial depths, great ego universes, great islands of repair, for whomever attains to individuality. On the surface, where the historical battles rage, where everything is interpreted in terms of money and power, there may be crowding, but life only begins when one drops below the surface, when one gives up the struggle, sinks and disappears from sight. Now I can as easily not write as write: there is no longer any compulsion, no longer any therapeutic aspect to it. Whatever I do is done out of sheer joy: I drop my fruits like a ripe tree. What the general reader or the critic makes of it is not my concern. I am not establishing values: I defecate and nourish. There is nothing more to it.

This condition of sublime indifference is a logical development of the egocentric life. I lived out the social problem by dying: the real problem is not one of getting on with one's neighbour or of contributing to the development of one's country, but of discovering one's destiny, of making a life in accord with the deep-centred rhythm of the cosmos. To be able to use the word cosmos boldly, to use the word soul to deal in things 'spiritual'—and to shun definitions, alibis, proofs, duties. Paradise is everywhere, and every road, if one continues along it far enough, leads to it. One can only go forward by going backward and then sideways and then up and then down. There is no progress: there is perpetual movement, displacement, which is circular, spiral, endless. Every man has his own destiny: the only imperative is to follow it, to accept it, no matter where it lead him.

I haven't the slightest idea what my future books will be like, even the one immediately to follow. My charts and plans are the slenderest sort of guides: I scrap them at will. I invent, distort, deform, lie, inflate, exaggerate, confound



and confuse as the mood seizes me. I obey only my own instincts and intuitions. I know nothing in advance. Often I put down things which I do not understand myself, secure in the knowledge that later they will become clear and meaningful to me. I have faith in the man who is writing, who is myself, the writer. I do not believe in words, no matter if strung together by the most skilful man: I believe in language, which is something beyond words, something which words give only an inadequate illusion of. Words do not exist separately, except in the minds of scholars, etymologists, philologists, etc. Words divorced from language are dead things, and yield no secrets. A man is revealed in his style, the language which he has created for himself. To the man who is pure at heart I believe that everything is as clear as a bell, even the most esoteric scripts. For such a man there is always mystery, but the mystery is not mysterious, it is logical, natural, ordained, and implicitly accepted. Understanding is not a piercing of the mystery, but an acceptance of it, a living blissfully with it, in it, through and by it. I would like my words to flow along in the same way that the world flows along, a serpentine movement through incalculable dimensions, axes, latitudes, climates, conditions. I accept a priori my inability to realize such an ideal. It does not bother me in the least. In the ultimate sense, the world itself is pregnant with failure, is the perfect manifestation of imperfection, of the consciousness of failure. In the realization of this, failure is itself eliminated. Like the primal spirit of the universe, like the unshakable Absolute, the One, the All, the creator, the artist, expresses himself by and through imperfection. It is the stuff of life, the very sign of livingness. One gets nearer to the heart of truth, which I suppose is the ultimate aim of the writer, in the measure that he ceases to struggle, in the measure that he abandons the will. The great writer is the very symbol of life, of the non-perfect. He moves effortlessly, giving the illusion of perfection, from some unknown centre which is certainly not the brain centre but which is definitely a centre, a centre connected with the rhythm of the whole universe and consequently as sound, solid, unshakable, as durable, defiant, anarchic, purposeless, as the universe itself. Art teaches nothing, except the

significance of life. The great work must inevitably be obscure, except to the very few, to those who, like the author himself, are initiated into the mysteries. Communication then, is secondary: it is perpetuation which is important. For this only one good reader is necessary.

If I am a revolutionary, as has been said, it is unconsciously. I am not in revolt against the world order. 'I revolutionize', as Blaise Cendrars said of himself. There is a difference. I can as well live on the minus side of the fence as on the plus side. Actually I believe myself to be living just above these two signs, providing a ratio between them which expresses itself plastically, non-ethically, in writing. I believe that one has to pass beyond the sphere and influence of art. Art is only a means to life, to the life more abundant. It is not in itself the life more abundant. It merely points the way to something which is overlooked, not only by the public but very often by the artist himself. In becoming an end it defeats itself. Most artists are defeating life by their very attempt to grapple with it. They have split the egg in two. All art, I firmly believe, will one day disappear. But the artist will remain, and life itself will become not 'an art' but *art*, i.e. will definitely and for all time usurp the field. In any true sense we are certainly not yet alive. We are no longer animals, but we are certainly not yet *men*. Since the dawn of art every great artist has been dinning that into us, but few are they who have understood it. Once art is really accepted it will cease to be. It is only a substitute, a symbol-language, for something which can be seized directly. But for that to become possible man must become thoroughly religious, not a believer, but a prime mover, a god in fact and deed. He will become that inevitably. And of all the detours along this path art is the most glorious, the most fecund, the most instructive. The artist who becomes thoroughly aware consequently ceases to be one. And the trend is towards awareness, towards that blinding consciousness in which no present form of life can possibly flourish, not even art.

To some this will sound like mystification, but it is an honest statement of my present convictions. It should be borne in mind, of course, that there is an inevitable discrepancy between the truth of the matter and what one thinks,



ven about himself; but it should also be borne in mind that there exists an equal discrepancy between the judgment of another and this same truth. Between subjective and objective there is no vital difference. Everything is illusive and more or less transparent. All phenomena, including man and his thoughts about himself, is nothing more than a movable, changeable alphabet. There are no solid facts to get hold of. Thus, in writing, even if my distortions and deformations be deliberate, they are not necessarily less near to the truth of things. One can be absolutely truthful and sincere even though admittedly the most outrageous liar. Fiction and convention are the very fabric of life. The truth is no way disturbed by the violent perturbations of the spirit.

Thus, whatever effects I may obtain by technical device are never the mere results of technique, but the very accurate registering by my seismographic needle of the tumultuous, manifold, mysterious and incomprehensible experiences which I have lived through and which, in the process of writing, are lived through again, differently, perhaps even more tumultuously, more mysteriously, more incomprehensibly. The so-called core of solid fact, which forms the point of departure as well as repair, is deeply embedded in me: I could not possibly lose it, alter it, disguise it, try as I may. And yet it *is* altered, just as the face of the world is altered, with each moment that we breathe. To record it, then, we must give a double illusion—one of arrestation and one of flow. It is this dual trick, so to speak, which gives the illusion of falsity: it is this lie, this fleeting, metamorphic mask, which is of the very essence of art. One anchors oneself to the flow: one adopts the lying mask in order to reveal the truth.

I have often thought that I should like one day to write a book explaining how I wrote certain passages in my books, perhaps just one passage. I believe I could write a good-sized book on just one small paragraph selected at random from my work. A book about its inception, its genesis, its metamorphosis, its accouchement, of the time which elapsed between the birth of the idea and its recording, the time it took to write it, the thoughts I had between times while writing it, the day of the week, the state of my health, the

condition of my nerves, the interruptions that occurred, those of my own volition and those which were forced upon me, the multifarious varieties of expression which occurred to me in the process of writing, the alterations, the point where I left off and, in returning, completely altered the original trend, or the point where I skilfully left off, like a surgeon making the best of a bad job, intending to return and resume some time later, but never doing so, or else returning and continuing the trend unconsciously some few books later when the memory of it had completely vanished. Or I might take one passage against another, passages which the critical eye of the critic seizes on as examples of this or that, and utterly confound them, the analytical-minded critics, demonstrating how a seemingly effortless piece of writing was achieved under great duress, whereas another difficult labyrinthian passage was written like a breeze, like a geyser erupting. Or I could show how a passage originally shaped itself when in bed, how it became transformed upon arising and again transformed at the moment of sitting down to record it. Or I could produce my scratch pad to show how the most remote, the most artificial stimulus produced a warm, lifelike human flower. I could produce certain words discovered by hazard while rifling the pages of a book, show how they set me off—but who on earth could ever guess how, in what manner, they were to set me off? All that the critics write about a work of art, even at the best, even when most sound, convincing, plausible, even when done with love, which is seldom, is as nothing compared with the actual mechanics, the real genetics of a work of art. I remember my work, not word for word, to be sure, but in some most accurate, trustworthy way; my whole work has come to resemble a terrain of which I have made a thorough, genetic survey, not from a desk, with pen and ruler, but by touch, by getting down on all fours, on my stomach, and crawling over the ground inch by inch, and this over an endless period of time in all conditions of weather. In short I am as close to the work now as when I was in the act of executing it—closer, perhaps. The conclusion of a book was never anything more than a shift of bodily position. It might have ended in a thousand different ways. No single part of

finished off; I could resume the narrative at any point, carry on, lay canals, tunnels, bridges, houses, factories, stud with other inhabitants, other fauna and flora, all equally due to fact. I have no beginning and no ending, actually. Just as life begins at any moment, through an act of realization, so the work. But each beginning, whether of book, page, paragraph, sentence or phrase, marks a vital connection, and it is in the vitality, the durability, the timelessness and changelessness of the thoughts and events that I plunge anew each time. Every line and word is vitally connected with my life, *my* life only, be it in the form of deed, event, act, thought, emotion, desire, evasion, frustration, dream, every, vagary, even the unfinished nothings which float restlessly in the brain like the snapped filaments of a spider's web. There is nothing really vague or tenuous—even the nothingnesses are sharp, tough, definite, durable. Like the spider I return again and again to the task, conscious that the web I am spinning is made of my own substance, that it will never fail me, never run dry.

In the beginning I had dreams of rivalling Dostoevski. I hoped to give to the world huge, labyrinthian soul struggles which would devastate the world. But before very far along I realized that we had evolved to a point far beyond that of Dostoevski—*beyond* in the sense of degeneration. With us the soul problem has disappeared, or rather presents itself in some strangely distorted chemical guise. We are dealing with crystalline elements of the dispersed and shattered soul. The modern painters express this state or condition perhaps even more forcibly than the writer: Picasso is the perfect example of what I mean. It was quite impossible for me, therefore, to think of writing novels; equally unthinkable to follow the various blind alleys represented by the various literary movements in England, France and America. I felt compelled, in all honesty, to take the disparate and dispersed elements of our life—the *soul* life, not the cultural life—and manipulate them through my own personal mode, using my own shattered and dispersed ego as heartlessly and recklessly. I would the flotsam and jetsam of the surrounding phenomenal world. I have never felt any antagonism for or anxiety over the anarchy represented by the prevailing forms of art;



on the contrary, I have always welcomed the dissolving influences. In an age marked by dissolution, liquidation seems to me a virtue, nay, a moral imperative. Not only have I never felt the least desire to conserve, bolster up, buttress anything, but I might say that I have always looked upon decay as being just as wonderful and rich an expression of life as growth.

I think I should also confess that I was driven to writing because it proved to be the only outlet open to me, the only task worthy of my powers. I had honestly tried all the other roads to freedom. I was a self-willed failure in the so-called world of reality, not a failure because of lack of ability. Writing was not an 'escape', a means of evading the everyday reality: on the contrary, it meant a still deeper plunge into the brackish pool—a plunge to the source? where the waters were constantly being renewed, where there was perpetual movement and stir. Looking back upon my career I see myself as a person capable of undertaking most any task, any vocation. It was the monotony and sterility of the other outlets which drove me to desperation. I demanded a realm in which I should be both master and slave at the same time: the world of art is the only such realm. I entered it without any apparent talent, a thorough novice, incapable, awkward, tongue-tied, almost paralysed by fear and apprehensiveness. I had to lay one brick on another, millions of words to paper before writing one real, authentic word dragged up from my own guts. The facility of speech which I possessed was a handicap; I had all the vices of the educated man. I had to learn to think, feel and see in a totally new fashion, in an uneducated way, *in my own way*, which was the hardest thing in the world. I had to throw myself into the current, knowing that I would probably sink. The great majority of artists are throwing themselves in with life-preservers around their necks, and more often than not it is the life-preserver which sinks them. Nobody can drown in the ocean of reality who voluntarily gives himself up to the experience. Whatever there be of progress in life comes not through adaptation but through daring, through obeying the blind urge. 'No daring is fatal', said Rene Crevel, a phrase which I shall never forget. The whole logic of the

universe is contained in daring, i.e. in creating from the flimsiest, slenderest support. In the beginning this daring is mistaken for will, but with time the will drops away and the automatic process takes its place, which again has to be broken or dropped and a new certitude established which has nothing to do with knowledge, skill, technique or faith. By daring one arrives at this mysterious  $\alpha$  position of the artist, and it is this anchorage which no one can describe in words but yet subsists and exudes from every line that is written.

ELIZABETH BOWEN

## A LOVE STORY

MIST lay over the estuary, over the terrace, over the hollows of the gummy sub-tropical garden of the hotel. Now and then a soft sucking sigh came from the water, as though someone were turning over in his sleep. At the head of the steps down to the boathouse a patch of hydrangeas still flowered and rotted, though it was December. It was six o'clock, dark—unhindered chinks of light from the hotel lay yellow, blurred on the density that muffled everything up. Light from the double glass doors fell down the damp steps: at the head of the steps the cast-iron lamps were unlit.

Inside the doors, the lounge with its high curtained windows was empty. Brilliantly hotly lit by electric light, it looked like a stage on which there has been a hitch. Light glared on the *vieux rose* curtains and on the ocean of carpet with its jazz design. The armchairs and settees with their taut stuffing had an air of brutal, resilient strength. Brass ashtrays without a segment of ash stood on small tables dotted over the lounge. One glass screen kept the lounge from any draughts from the door, another protected the lounge from the stairs. But there was nothing to dread: the heating was on, only a smell of tinder-dry turkey carpet, varnish, paint, polish and radiators came down from the empty

floors above. In the immense fireplace a fire burned with visible silent roar.

From a cabinet came the voice announcing the six o'clock war news. In the middle of this, three berries fell from a vase of holly and pattered noisily into a brass tray. The temperate voice of the announcer paused for a moment, half-way through a disaster, as though disturbed by the noise. A spur of gas from a coal sent a whicker up through the fire. The unheard news came to an end.

Two women came up the steps and pushed in at the glass doors. Their hair was sticky from the damp of the mist. The girl steered her mother round the screen to the fire, then went across and turned off the wireless. The mother unbuttoned her leather coat and threw it back from her hands into some full chest. Keyed up by the sudden electric light, her manner was swaggering and excitable. She looked with contempt at the wireless cabinet and said: '*I don't care what I hear—now!*'

'Do shut up, mother. Do sit down.'

'Do stop being so nervous of me, Teresa. Whatever do you think I'm going to do?'

Teresa took off her trenchcoat and slung it over a chair, then crossed the lounge with her loose cross walk, in her slacks. 'I know what you *want*,' she said flatly, ringing the bell. She sat down in an armchair by the fire and stuck her young slender jaw out and crossed her legs. Her mother stayed standing up, with her shoulders braced back; she kept pushing her hair back from her forehead with her long plump, fine-wristed ringed hand. 'I daresay you're right to be so nervous,' she said. 'I don't know myself what I'll do from minute to minute. Why did I have to come here—can you tell me that? Why was this the only thing I could do? Do you know when I was last here—who I was with?'

'I suppose I can guess,' said Teresa, defensively. 'You know you don't want me to understand you, mother, so I'm not trying to.'

'It's a terrible thing to say,' said Mrs. Massey, 'but it would be better if this had happened to you. I'd rather see you suffer than have no feelings. You're not like a woman, Teresa. And he was your age, not my age.'



'Is that so?' Teresa said, in a voice too lifeless for irony. Mrs. Massey looked angrily round the lounge and said: 'They've changed the chairs round, since.' She pointed to an empty space on the carpet and said: '*That* was where he sat. . . There isn't even his chair.'

Teresa looked pointedly off down the corridor. 'Michael's coming,' she said. A boy in a white cotton coat, with a dark vivid Kerry face, beamed at them through the glass screen, then came round the screen for orders. 'Good evening, Michael,' said Teresa.

'Good evening, miss. Good evening to you, ma'am.'

'It's not a good evening for me, I'm afraid, Michael.'

Michael lowered his eyes. 'I'm sorry to hear that,' he said, in a feeling voice. 'It's a long time since we saw you.'

'Does it seem so?' Mrs. Massey began wildly. But Teresa put up her hand and in a curt, raised voice, ordered her mother's drink . . . 'But I wanted a double,' objected Mrs. Massey, when Michael had gone.

'You know you had that at home,' said Teresa, 'and more than once.' More coldly, she added, 'And how fed-up Teddy used to get with it all.'

Frank and Linda, their fingers loosely linked, came downstairs on their way to their private sitting-room. They glanced vacantly through the screen and turned left down the corridor. 'We missed the news again,' she said, as he shut the door. 'We always seem to run late.'

'We can't help that, darling,' he said. Their fire had been made up while they were upstairs; she gave it an unnecessary kick with her heel, and said: 'Did you see those two making a scene in the lounge?'

'I sort of did see the girl,' Frank said. 'Which was the other?'

'I thought they looked like locals in for a drink. Or I daresay they came round here to make a scene. I do think the Irish are exhibitionists.'

'Well, we can't help that, darling, can we,' said Frank, ringing the bell. He sat down in a chair and said: 'Oh my God. . . .' Linda dropped into the chair opposite. 'Well,

really,' Frank said. 'However, I feel fine. I don't care what time it is.'

Up in a sitting-room on the first floor, the Perry-Dunton two dogs slept in front of the fire, bellies taut to the hearth. Legs rigid, they lay in running attitudes, liked stuffed dogs knocked over on to their sides. On the sofa, pulled up opposite the fire, was Clifford—feet braced against one end, backbone against the other, knees up, typewriter in the lap, his stomach, chin tucked down into his chest. With elbows in to his ribs in a trussed position, he now and then made a cramped dash at the keys. When the keys stopped, he stayed frowning at them. Sheet after sheet, completely without conviction, fluttered on to the hearthrug between the dogs.

Polly Perry-Dunton's armchair was pushed up so that one arm made telepathic contact with Clifford's sofa. Curled up childishly in the cushions, she held a Penguin volume a little above her face. She kept the stiff Penguin open by means of an anxious pressure from her thumb. She read like someone told to pose with a book, and seemed unable to read without holding her breath.

Crackles came now and then from the *Daily Sketch* that Clifford had stuck in a wedge under his feet. Light blazed on their two heads from a marble bowl near the ceiling. The top of the mantelpiece was stacked with Penguins; the other armchair slid with American magazines. Polly's portable wireless in its shagreen cover stood unspeaking on the floor by her chair. An art photograph of Clifford and Polly in profile just overlapping like heads on a coin, was propped on the whatnot and kept from slipping by Polly's toy pan from Fortnum's.

Clifford reached out his right hand, apparently vaguely. Polly uncoiled like a spring from the armchair, knelt on the hearthrug and lit him a cigarette. Cigarette pressed tight between his lips, Clifford returned to frown at the keys again. She sat back on her heels to adore his frown, his curls, his fresh skin—then she locked her arms tightly around his neck. The impulsive light little-girlishness of the movement made him still say nothing, not even turn his head.

She said into his cheek: 'May Polly say one thing?'

'Mm-mm.'

'I've left my pussy gloves in the car.'

'Mm-mm. . . . You don't want them, do you?'

'No, not indoors. I wouldn't want gloves indoors. But let's remember to-morrow. . . . Look, you crumpled one sheet right up. Did you mean to?'

'I meant to.'

Polly reverently uncrumpled the sheet. 'Pity,' she said, 'it's beautifully typed. Do you mean you're *not* going to say all that?'

'No. I'm trying to think of something else.'

'I should think most people could never think of so much that they were even not going to say.'

Clifford waited a minute, then he unfastened Polly's arms from his neck with as little emotion as a woman undoing a boa. He then typed five or six lines in a sort of rush. She returned with a glugged sigh to her chair, thumbed her book, held her breath and thought of her pussy gloves.

Clifford's voice to Polly was always the same: resignation or irony kept it on one note. The two of them had been over here on honeymoon when the war began: here they still were, because of the war. Some days he went out with his gun along the foot of the mountain, some days they ran the motor boat in and out of white inlets or to an island, some days they went out in Polly's big car. When they had run the car back into the lock-up they would walk back, her hand creeping inside his, down the tarmac curve to the hotel between walls of evergreen. At this hour, the tarmac gleamed wet-white in the lasting luminous Irish dusk. From this hour, claustrophobia resumed its sway. Polly hardly reached up to Clifford's shoulder; she walked beside him with her little skip-and-jump. She felt that his being so tall, she so little, cancelled out their adverse difference in age. She was thirty-two, he twenty-four. Her trim little sexless figure, her kilted skirts, socks, and little-girl snooded hair that flopped forward so softly could make her look fourteen. Without the ring of technicians who got her up she could have easily looked faded and sluttish, like a little shop girl wilting behind the



goods. But she had a childish hard will, and by day she never looked old.

She grew up when she was asleep. Then, a map of unwilling adult awareness—lines, tensions and hollows—appeared in her exposed face. Harsh sleep froze her liquidities, her features assembled themselves and became austere. An expression of watching wrote itself on the lids of her shut eyes. The dread she denied all day came out while she slept and stood in the door. The flittering of a palm tree, the bump of a moored boat as the tide rose, the collapse of a last corner in their grate went straight to the nerves upright under her sleep. She slept tenaciously, late into the daylight—but Clifford never looked at her long.

Her rape of Clifford—with his animal muteness, nonchalance, mystery and the charm of the obstination of his wish to write—had been the climax of Polly's first real wish. Her will had detected the flaw in his will that made the rape possible. Her father had bought him for her. Till they met her wealth and her years of styleless backgroundless dullness had atrophied Polly. The impulse with which she first put her arms around Clifford's neck and told him never to leave her had been, however, unforced and pure. Rain—a little rain, not much—fell on her small parched nature at Clifford's tentative kiss. There had seemed no threat to Polly in Clifford's nature till the war came, with its masculine threat. Their sequestration now, here, remained outwardly simple. Clifford handled no money, Polly drew all the cheques.

They stayed on here where they were hidden and easy—any move might end in some fatal way. The Perry-Duntons knew almost nothing of the hotel. They had meals served in their suite, and only went down or upstairs or through the lounge on their way outdoors or in. During such appearances, Polly's service-flat temperament sheathed her in passive, moronic unseeingness. Her blindness made everything negative—Clifford saw nothing, either. He walked out or in through the public rooms beside her, tense, persecuted by the idea of notice, with his baited, defensive frown. The hotel had come to return the Perry-Duntons' indifference. The out-of-season skeleton staff of servants served them with no interest, up to Polly's idea that they were automatons.

servants love love and money, but the Perry-Duntons bored the servants, by now. By now even Mrs. Coughlan, the manageress, spoke of these rich patrons with apathy. The Perry-Duntons deadened the air round them with their static, depleting intimacy.

Now, Clifford twitched one more sheet off the typewriter. Leaning sideways over from the sofa, he with absorption began to tickle a dog's belly with an edge of the sheet. The dog went itself back further, into a bow. Watchful, Polly judged that this meant a break. She got up and began to tug like a nesting bird at the *Daily Sketch* under Clifford's feet. 'What's that there for?' she said. 'I don't think I've looked at it yet.'

'Sorry,' said Clifford, raising his feet.

'But what's it *there* for, Clifford?'

'I was taught not to put my boots up on things—not straight up on things, that is.'

'How funny, because you generally do. I wonder what made you just think of that?'

Clifford could not tell her. He swung his feet off the sofa on to the hearthrug between the dogs. Sitting forward on the edge of the sofa, elbows on his wide-apart knees, he dug his heels slowly, without passion, into the rug. He looked down between his hands with their hanging bunches of fingers to the oriental pattern under them. Polly picked up a sheet of his typewriting and began to read. 'Goodness,' she said, after an interval, 'I hope you're not going to throw *this* one away! . . . What's the matter?'

'I'm going out for your gloves.'

'Oh, but I don't want them.'

'I'd like to go out for them, rather. I'd like a stretch.'

'*Alone*, Clifford?'

'There's a mist.'

'You might get lost. You might walk into the water. Do you really *want* to go out?'

At this, the dogs got up and looked eager. He pushed at them with his foot. 'No, stay with Polly,' he said. 'I won't be long.'

'You do promise?' She folded herself away from him in an abandon of puzzled sadness. Clifford kicked the dogs back again and went quietly round the door.

Frank stepped across the corridor to the office to get stamp for Linda. The plate glass and mahogany front of the office was framed in tariffs of summer trips, sets of view postcards printed in sepia, and a timetable of the Protestant Church. The glass hatch was down: Frank put his foot against it and looked flirtatiously into the back recess. On a inside ledge, the register was just out of view. Mrs. Coughlan put up the glass hatch, like a lady playing at keeping secret. She received the full blast of Frank's full-blooded charm. 'Stamp?' she said. 'Oh dear, now Miss Heally knows where they are. To tell you the truth, I'm afraid I don't, and Miss Heally's just upstairs having a little rest. We're very quiet just now. Don't you find it terribly quiet—Major Mull?'

'Mr. Mull,' said Frank. 'Oh, we love it,' he said.

'Still, it's not like the season, is it. Will you be back with us then?'

'Will I not!' Frank said, with ardour.

'Is the stamp for yourself?'

'Well, it's not; it's for my cousin.'

'Ah yes,' said Mrs. Coughlan, not batting an eyelid. 'The post went, you know; it went about five minutes ago. But I tell you what—were you never in the last war?'

'I was,' said Frank. 'But I'm not in this one, thank God.'

'Now Miss Heally thought you had some military rank. I tell you what I could do, I could let you have a stamp, if I could trouble you to step this way.'

She pressed with her corsets against the door of the counter, and Frank let her out. She preceded him down the warm, half-lit, spongy-carpeted passage to the door of his sitting-room: from this, she recoiled on to Frank's toe, at the same time blowing a whisper in at his right ear. 'I won't ask you in here,' she said, 'if you don't mind. I've a lady in here who's a little upset.' As she spoke, the door of the sitting-room opened, and the, to Frank's eye, snappy form of Teresa appeared, outlined in electric light. Teresa glowered at Frank, then said: 'We'll be going now, Mrs. Coughlan. I think my mother would really rather be home.'

'I would not rather!' exclaimed unseen Mrs. Masse. 'For God's sake, Teresa, let me alone.'

'No, don't let me barge in,' said Frank, standing firm.



st where he was. Mrs. Coughlan flashed at him the recognition that *he* would be always the gentleman. 'Well, if you'll excuse me,' she said, 'for just a jiffy, I'll bring the stamp on to your sitting-room.'

Frank went back to Linda. He left their door an inch open and, while they were waiting, rang for a glass of port. 'What's at for?' said Linda. 'I wanted a stamp.'

'That's for Mrs. Coughlan. You'll get your stamp to play with. But of course you know that the post's gone?'

'Then hell! what is the good of a stamp?'

'You said you wanted a stamp, so I'm getting a stamp for you. I love getting you anything that you want.'

'Then what's the point of my having written this letter?'

'None, darling; I told you that. Writing letters is just gets. Never mind, it will come in some time when you want a letter to post.'

Disengaging herself from Frank's kiss, Linda propped the letter up on the mantelpiece, on a carton of cigarettes. While he kissed her again, she looked at it out of one eye. This made Frank look too. 'Oh, *that's* who it's to,' he said. She made faces at it, while Linda, still held pressed to his chest, giggled contentedly. 'I sort of had to,' she said, 'or I wouldn't know where I am.'

Mrs. Coughlan came in with the stamp. The port was brought in by Michael and put on the mantelpiece. She started at it, but after a certain amount of fuss was induced to hold her glass daintily. 'Well, here's to you,' she said. 'And you too,' she said to Linda. 'But isn't this really dreadful, this hour!'

'Good for the heart,' said Frank. 'Not that your heart needs it, I'm sure. But your caller sounded to me a bit off.'

'Oh, Mrs. Massey's had bad news. She came round here with her daughter, then didn't feel well.'

'Was she in the lounge?' said Linda.

'She was first, but it didn't seem fit for her, so Miss Teresa made her come in to me. You don't know who might come into a public room. So I said, to come in to me for a little rest, while I kept an eye on the office while Miss Heally was up. We are all devoted to Mrs. Massey,' said Mrs. Coughlan, meeting the eye of Linda just a shade stonily. 'I

was saying to Miss Heally only this morning, wasn't it long since we'd seen Teresa or her. They're in and out, a rule, with the friends Mrs. Massey has staying. They're quite near to here, through the woods, though it's longer if you take the two avenues. They've a sweet place, there, but it's lonely; they've nothing there but the sea.'

'Through the woods?' said Linda. 'Then, do you mean that pink house?—That's that house *we* want,' she said to Frank. Mrs. Coughlan glanced primly midway between the two of them. 'Yes, it's a sweet place, Palmlawn,' said Mrs. Coughlan. 'We often say, she seems quite wedded to it.'

Frank said: 'Is Teresa the tiger cat?'

Far too much won by Frank, Mrs. Coughlan had to pay to prop up her loyalties. 'Well, her manner's just a wee bit short,' she said. 'And this evening, of course, *she's* up too.'

'She sounded more fed-up.'

Mrs. Coughlan, replacing her glass on the mantelpiece, dabbed her mouth with an *eau de nil* handkerchief charged with *Muguet de Coty*. Reassembling herself as manageress, she threw an inventorial glance round their sitting-room. 'I hope,' she said, 'you have everything? Everything complete. Ring if it isn't, won't you?'

'Yes, thanks,' said Linda, 'we're very cosy in here.'

Mrs. Coughlan, whose business it was to know how to take everything, knew perfectly well how to take this. 'Well, I must be running along. Thank you very much, Mrs. Mull—Mr. Mull—I hope you'll join *me* for a minute or two this evening, unless, of course, you're engaged. . . Isn't this war shocking?'

'Shocking,' said Frank. 'I sell cars.'

'Very,' said Linda. 'Why?'

'I can't help thinking,' said Mrs. Coughlan, 'of poor Mr. Massey's friend. A flying man. He was often in here with her, you know.'

Fumbling with the slimy lock in the mist, Clifford unlocked the lock-up. He reached into the Alvis, switched dashboard lights on and got in and sat in the car to look at Polly's gloves. Mist came curdling in after him. He put



'Irish Girl' by Victor Pasmore from the current exhibition at Wildenstein's Galleries.





st-length fluffy gloves in one pocket. Then he checked on the petrol: there were six gallons still. Then he plunged his hand slowly into another of his pockets, touched the coins, thumbed the two half-crowns. In the dark his body shivered, not for the first time, yet another shock of the current idea. The shock, as always, dulled out. He switched the lights off, folded his arms, slid forward and sat in the dark deflated—completely deflated, a dying pig that had died.

Frank and Linda, intently silently cosy in front of their living-room fire in the dark, heard people break into the passage from Mrs. Coughlan's room. At this Frank, with cat stealth and quickness, raised his face from the top of Linda's head. His ears, close to his head, might have been expected to prick up. 'Damn!', said Linda, missing Frank, 'something is always happening.' The concourse passed their door. 'That's Mrs. Massey, that was.' Frank at once pressed his hands on Linda's shoulders. 'But,' he said, 'could I just have a look-see?' He got up, padded across the room, opened the door an inch and put one eye to the hallway.

Mrs. Coughlan had not gone far. She immediately came back and fitted her mouth neatly into the inch of door. 'Mr. Mull, could I trouble you just a minute?'

Frank edged round the door and Linda was left alone.

Mrs. Massey was not equal to the walk back. This—only to herself as an additional rush of sorrow—was clear to Teresa, and also to Mrs. Coughlan, as a predicament. There had been talk, before they left Mrs. Coughlan's parlour, of telephoning to the village for a car. Mrs. Massey would not brook the idea. 'I won't give trouble,' she said, 'there's trouble enough already.' Magnificent with protest, she now stood trembling and talking loudly and sweeping her hair back at the foot of the stairs. 'I should never have come,' she said. 'But how could I stay where I was? We'll go home now; I'll just go quietly home. Are you gummed there, Teresa? Come home: we've been here quite long enough!' She gave Frank a haunted look as Mrs. Coughlan brought him up. 'This is Mr. Mull, Mrs. Massey,' said Mrs. Coughlan.

'Mr. Mull says he'll just get his car out and run you home.'

Mrs. Massey said: 'I don't know what you all think.'

Teresa, taking no notice, put on her trenchcoat and tight buckled the belt. 'That is good of you,' she said to Frank slightly. 'Aren't you busy?'

'Not in the world,' said Frank. 'Hold on while I get my car round.'

'You needn't do that, thank you: mother and I can walk as far as the car.'

Teresa and Frank, with Mrs. Massey between them, started off down the aisle of carpet to the glass doors. 'Are the steps dreadfully dark for her!' yelled Miss Healy, who was there with the rest—she shot ahead to switch on the outdoor lamps. The three passed down the steps in the blaze of a blaze of lights, as though leaving a ball. 'Good-night now. Safe home, Mrs. Massey, dear!' called Miss Healy and Mrs. Coughlan from the top of the steps. Linda, hearing the noise, hearing Frank's step on the gravel, threw a window up and leaned into the mist. She called: 'Frank!'

He replied, if at all, with a gesture that she could not see. He was busy steering the party. 'Left turn,' he said, patting Mrs. Massey's elbow. The mother and daughter wheeled docilely.

'Do you know where we are, at all?'

'Oh, I'm used to all this.'

'Do you come from London, then?' Teresa said.

'I've come back from London.'

'On leave?' said Teresa, quickly.

'No, thank God. I sell cars.'

'You won't sell many just now.' Teresa's trenchcoat brushed on the evergreens. Majestic and dazed between the escort, Mrs. Massey stumbled along in a shackled way. The yard, the open doors of the lock-up beside Frank's store, came out clammy into the mist: they almost walked into them. 'That lunatic's taken that Alvis out,' said Frank. Teresa, in her not encouraging way, said: 'Well, you'll be another lunatic, in a minute.' Mrs. Massey, ignoring the dialogue, detached herself quietly from Teresa. While Frank and the torch and key were busy over a padlock, Mrs. Massey passed quietly into the open lock-up next door. She bumped



nee on the Alvis and started to climb round it. 'It's all right, Teresa, the car's in here,' she called back, with quite an approach to her usual gaiety.

Clifford's reflex to the bump on the car was to blaze all his lights on. Inside, his lock-up became one curdled glare; his oil light spread a ruby stain on the mist. He turned his head sharply and stayed with his coinlike profile immobilized against the glaring end wall. Mrs. Massey came scrambling to view. Clifford put down one window. 'I beg your pardon?' he said.

'Better back out a little,' said Mrs. Massey. 'I can't get this side while you're in here.' Clifford started his engine and backed out. But then he pulled up, got up and got half out of the car. 'I'm afraid this is not your car,' he said.

'How could it be my car,' said Mrs. Massey, 'when my car's at home? This is so kind of you—I don't know what you must think. Let me in now, though.' Clifford shrank back; she got in and settled herself by him contentedly. 'There's my daughter to come,' she said, 'and a man from the hotel. Just wait, now, and they'll show you the way.'

Frank had only just got his lock-up open when Teresa was at his elbow again. 'We'll hang on a minute,' he said, 'and let this other chap out. I'll start up. Be getting your mother at the back.'

'My mother's got into the other car.'

'Which car?'

'I don't know. Don't dawdle there—are you mad? Mother might be off anywhere!'

Frank went out to blink. The Alvis, almost silently turning, swept a choked glare through the mist. 'Oh, *that* chap,' Frank said. 'That chap won't eat anyone. Cut along, Teresa—look, he's waiting for you.'

'I don't know him.'

'Mother knows him by now.'

'You're well out of us,' said Teresa, standing still bitterly.

'If that's what you think,' Frank said, 'I'll come along too.'

Linda was told of Frank's kindness in volunteering to drive the Masseys home. Mrs. Coughlan was very much

pleased and could not praise him enough. He should be back at the hotel in twenty minutes—but Linda knew he would not be. Frank's superabundance of good feeling made Linda pretty cross—his gusto, his sociability, and his conquering bossiness. He liked life, and wherever he was things opened. This evening, first Mrs. Coughlan, now Mrs. Massey. . . . Except in bed, one was seldom alone with Frank. Having interfered once more, and got one more kind answer, he would come back like a cat full of rabbit again. Linda was quite suspended. She wished there were pin-tables in this high-class hotel. She rang for a drink and two packs of cards and sat down and laid out a complex Patience on the octagonal table below the sitting-room light. She thanked God she was not as young as she had been, and no longer fell into desperations or piques. It was not that Frank did not concentrate, but he concentrated on so many things. She looked up once from her Patience at her stamped letter, and thought of tearing it up and writing a warmer one.

Mrs. Coughlan and Miss Heally returned to their sitting-room: opening the piano they began to play a duet.

Polly Perry-Dunton, as well as Linda, heard the piano. Every three minutes Polly looked at her watch. After five minutes, Polly left her sitting-room and went and lay on her bed in a sort of rigour. She pulled Clifford's pyjamas from under the pillow and buried her face in them.

The Alvis, dip lights squinting along the row of street trees on the left, nosed its way through the mist down the avenue. Mrs. Massey, in absolute quiescence, leaned back by Clifford's shoulder: he drove in silence. Frank, in the back of the car beside Teresa, had noncommittally drawn his arm through his. Teresa did not take her eyes from the back of her mother's head. When the open white gates loomed Teresa leaned forward and told Clifford which way to turn. About a mile down the main road Teresa again spoke. Clifford turned through more gates, and the four of them passed with well-sprung smoothness over the bumps of the peaty wet avenue. An uneasy smell of the sea came up in the mist. Rhododendrons lolled and brushed the sides of the car. The left wheels mounted an edge of lawn. Clifford turned

sweep and undipped his lights on verandah-post and the solid walls of a house.

'Teresa,' said Mrs. Massey, 'tell them to come in.'

Teresa lit the oil lamps under their dark pink shades. Mrs. Massey, one hand on her drawing-room mantelpiece, swayed with the noble naturalness of a tree. Her form, above a boulder of peat fire, was reflected in a mirror between the two dark windows—a mirror that ran from ceiling to floor. The room—with its 'possessions', its air of bravura and goodness, its low smoked ceiling, armchairs with caved-in seats, cabinets of fogged glass—began to be seen in the dark light. Clifford's thin Nordic figure and Frank's thick-set ringy one, firmly set on its heels, were also seen in the mirror, making a crowd.

'Sit down,' said Mrs. Massey. 'I feel more like standing. I'm afraid I'm restless—I had bad news, you know.'

'That is frightfully tough,' said Frank.

'I feel bad,' said Mrs. Massey, 'at not knowing your news. Yes, it's tough to be dead, isn't it? He was about your age,' she said to Clifford. 'Teresa, dear, are you gummed here? Go and look for the drinks.'

Through the shadows in which they were all still standing, Clifford threw an imploring look at Frank. Frank had to defer to Clifford's panic, and to Clifford's being not able to speak. 'Look, we must be pushing along,' he reluctantly, only said. Clifford bowed his heroic head sharply and took eager steps to the door: the nightmare of being wanted was beginning, in this room, to close in on him again.

Mrs. Massey only removed her eyes from Clifford to quint at the cigarette she was lighting over a lamp. Obliterated in shadows round the fire, Teresa, crouching, puffed at peat with a bellows. 'Teresa,' said her mother, 'do you see who he's so like?'

'There's no drink left, as you know,' said Teresa, quickly. 'I could make some tea, but they're just off.'

Clifford said: 'I'm afraid we *are* just off.'

In reply, Mrs. Massey lifted the lamp from its low table to hold it, unsteadily, on a level with Clifford's face. She took a step or two forward, with the lamp. 'It's extraordinary,'



she said, 'though you don't know it, that you should be this house *to-night*. You mustn't mind what I say or do: I'm upset.—You're English, too, aren't you?—*He* looks like a hero, doesn't he?' she said, appealingly to Frank.

'Now we've all had a look at each other,' said Frank firmly, 'let me take this out of your way.' Taking the winking lamp from Mrs. Massey, he put it safely back on the table again.

'I wish I were proud of *my* country,' said Mrs. Massey. 'But I'm ashamed of this country, to tell you the truth.'

'Oh, come,' said Frank. 'We have much to be thankful for.'

Teresa crashed the bellows into the grate and went out the room through the open door. Outside, she pulled up the chair and stood on it to light the lamp in the hall. Frank strolled after her and leaned in the door to watch. He said, 'Are you very fed-up?' The hanging lamp spun round, and Teresa's eyes, fixed on the burner, glittered. 'Is it bad?' Frank said. 'You don't tell me anything. Did *you* love that poor chap?'

'Did I get a chance?'

The chair she stood on wobbled on the uneven flagstones: Frank came and stood close up to steady the chair. 'Come down off that,' he said, 'like a good girl.' Teresa stepped down off the chair into Frank's arms—but she stood inside them like steel. He let her go, and watched her pick up her trenchcoat and walk off down a stone passage to the car. There she stayed, as though she were falling and could fall no further, with her breast and face thrust into the hanging coats. Her shoulder blades showed through her sweater, and Frank, coming up gently, put his two hands on them. 'She'd rather him dead,' said Teresa into the coats. 'she'd rather him dead than gone from her.' She kept moving her shoulders under Frank's hands.

'Could you cry? Could you have a cry if I took you now in that car?'

Teresa, into the coats, said something he could not hear. 'And leave those two?' she said in a louder voice.

Frank had to agree: he looked back at the drawing-room door.

Mrs. Massey and Clifford, waiting for Frank, now sat in two armchairs opposite the fire. 'I don't understand,' she said. 'How did we come in your car?'

'You got in,' he said tentatively.

'And where had you been going?'

'Nowhere; I was looking for my wife's gloves.' He pulled the pussy gloves out of his pocket and showed them, to show he spoke the truth. Looking intently at the pussy gloves, Mrs. Massey's eyes for the first time filled with tears. The access of some new feeling, a feeling with no context, resculptured her face. In the musty dark of her drawing-room, the dark fire and the dull fire, her new face looked alabaster and pure. The outline of her mist-clotted fair hair shook, as though shaken by the unconscious silent force of her tears.

'Aren't they small!' she said. 'Is your wife quite a little thing? Are you two very happy, then?'

'Very.'

'Take her gloves back safe. How English you are.'

Frank came in and said they must be pushing along. Teresa did not come in; she was opening the hall door. Out there on the sweep above the lawn and the sea, Clifford's lights were still blazing into the mist. Teresa went out and examined, as much by touch as anything, the wonderful car. The idea of going away forever lifted and moved her heart, like a tide coming in. A whiteness up in the mist showed where there should have been the moon; the asleep locked up of the bay sighed. A smell of fern-rot and sea water and gravel passed by Teresa into the house. Frank came to the hall door and saw her in the mist close to the car. He thought, dimly, of Linda wondering where he was, and wanted to go, and wanted to stay, and conceived how foolish it was, in love, to have to differentiate between women. In love there was no right and wrong, only the wish. However, he left Teresa alone and, going back into the drawing-room, said nothing further to Clifford about dinner.

Mrs. Massey was just detaching her arms from Clifford's back. 'I had to kiss him,' she said. 'He'll never understand

why.' She went slowly ahead of the two men out to the car. 'Dinner?' she said. 'Is that really what time it is?' 'Teresa?'

But there was no reply.

Up the mist between the formless rhododendrons Alvis, with Frank and Clifford, crawled back to the main road. 'If you thought of turning this car in before leaving this country,' Frank said, 'you might let me know first. My name's Mull—Mull, Cork always finds me.'

'My name's Perry-Dunton,' said Clifford, after a pause.

'Yes, I thought it might be.'

'Why?' said Clifford, alarmed.

'Caught my eye on the register. You two must like it here. And how right you are. Staying on?'

'Well, we're not quite sure of our plans.'

'I wish I wasn't—we've only got the week-end. Look, why don't you two drop down for a drink with us at dinner? My cousin would be delighted.'

'It is most awfully nice of you, but I don't think——'

'Right-o,' Frank said, slowly nodding his head.

## FORTHCOMING FEATURES

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F. McEACHRAN

## A DESPISED LIBERAL

THE alarming feature of social and political comments in practically all periodicals to-day is the way in which topics are prejudged by virtue of certain widely accepted clichés. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that any article, by whatever writer and of any persuasion, will indulge in some condemnation of *laissez-faire*, will urge further State control, will sneer at 'individualism' or 'private' enterprise and will cry out for more 'community' or 'public' feeling. Those who are Left-wing will exalt Socialism (without defining it), those who are Right-wing will encourage government power as bureaucracy, and neither, except in very carefully gloved phrases, will ever talk of human freedom. Phrases such as 'Intellectual Anarchist' (with a sneer), 'a bureaucracy friendly to art', 'organizing culture', 'once we have Socialism', culled from your own paper, spring at once to my mind. Allowing for the unfairness of quoting out of context, it still remains true that they betray certain underlying but unexamined assumptions.

The main assumption is that *laissez-faire* capitalism was utterly misconceived, both in theory and practice, and that Socialism or State bureaucracy (which covers both Left and Right adequately for our purpose) is the only hope for the future. This point of view, curiously enough, arises on the background of another and contradictory assumption which the writer has well expressed in the following passage: 'Our present bourgeois order was shown to be not an eternal natural condition of life, but simply the latest term in a succession of social orders.' Whether we are to infer from this that the coming socialistic order in turn will only be one in this same series, during or after the period of Dictatorship, I do not know. But quite certainly in this extreme relativism' which allows for no centre, one important element is overlooked entirely, and that is the march of science. And because this is overlooked the relativism seems

more absolute than it really is and the whole argument vitiated.

Relativism, in fact, in condemning Adam Smith, Ricardo and the classical economists, forgets that in the once famous book, *The Wealth of Nations*, a single scientific fact was put forward, namely, that trade should be free, and that governments could do nothing, absolutely nothing to it, except damage it.

The great defect in Adam Smith's economics was that he forgot to deal with the land problem<sup>1</sup> and with the fact that free trade on a background of monopoly leads to great enslavement of the worker (as Karl Marx rightly pointed out). But this need not, and should not, blind us to the truth he discovered, which is, once again, that trade should be free. While it was free, even in the limited sense of the nineteenth century, we did reap, as well as slums and poverty (which were not caused by it) an unprecedented increase in general wealth, a new conception of humanitarianism and a new sense of the free development of human thought.<sup>2</sup> Not so it happens that since trade has ceased to be free, even in the old limited sense, human welfare has receded, not advanced, that is all.

But my main point is this. We do not, when reading the early books on chemistry, blame the authors for not having discovered the whole science straight off. We rather praise them for what they achieved and look upon them as our forerunners. We do not talk of the relativity of science as though *their* chemistry suited *them* and *ours* *us*, and there was a genuine progress behind the continuum. Rather we extract from them the element of permanent truth and build on it. Why, then, is it not permissible to do the same thing with the discovery of free trade? The world is going back on it, of course, but well and good; that is simply a sign of regression. The Roman Empire 'went back' on Greek science but the discoveries remained, hidden though they were in books. So it may be with Adam Smith.

The discovery and implementation of natural law is real only the march of evolution on the human level, and each

<sup>1</sup> The land problem is fundamentally the 'rent problem'.

<sup>2</sup> A freedom which gave Karl Marx the opportunity to theorise freely.

law discovered, whether in the sphere of physics, or economics, or psychology, is similar to what a biologist would call a mutation on a lower physical level. The key to the value of new discoveries is the help they give the organism in adapting itself to the environment and increasing subjectively its sense of freedom. Now if the reader, and particularly the socially minded reader, will have patience, I will show how, if placed on his immemorially evolutionary background, mankind may be shown to be making, in this terrible twentieth century, a colossal biological mistake. This mistake is the appeal to the State Power.

In much the same way as a science like chemistry can make advances and then for a time these be forgotten, so also the science of economics, which is much more fundamental to human social life, can do the same. Moreover, in that economics affects so intimately the social structure for good or ill, its retrogression and advance can and do have the most powerful (even if only temporary) effects. An example of this is when, in the course of evolution, man made the economic mistake of regarding other men as commodities and setting up chattel slavery. The result, over the centuries, was the destruction of every society on this basis, not, as people think, because of any wickedness on the part of slaveholders, but because of the infringement of economic law. Man is not a commodity (i.e. the product of labour) and, if you make him one, you ultimately ruin the market. Production languishes, trade is crippled and the edifice breaks down. It took the human race nine thousand years to learn this lesson. Let us hope it has learnt it at last.

Adam Smith's discovery was a mere *étape* on the road to economic law. Before him and after him economic thinkers, the *Physiocrates* (Quesnay, Necker), Ricardo and Nassau Senior, were discovering the scientific roots of monopoly in the private appropriation of rent through the enclosures. I have no space to pursue this point here, and the following remarks will have to suffice. Karl Marx himself, the arch-enemy of Socialism, knew that the basis of capitalist exploitation lay in the enclosure of land, in particular the great enclosures between 1780 and 1840, which exposed the now landless worker to the mercy of the factory owner. What

he forgot to add was that the historical event of land enclosure is also the *permanent* basis of exploitation, ultimately the only source.

It is significant in this connection that the Marxist apologist, John Strachey, in *The Coming Struggle for Power* argues in precisely the same manner. 'The fight for freedom was the fight for the free market, from John Hampden, who opposed taxation, down to Cobden, who opposed the Corn Laws. Every monopoly was broken in this struggle—except the biggest and greatest of all—the land monopoly. And because the nineteenth century failed in this the twentieth is paying the penalty. It is forgetting what the fight for freedom is.'

It is now possible to sum up and to indicate some general line for the future. The error in the economics of the nineteenth century was not *laissez-faire*, but the absence of *laissez-faire*, insomuch as the land monopoly then reached heights which more than counteracted the effects of free trade. To explain why, psychologically and socially, it is difficult for people to see this would require a volume, but the facts are there for those who read. Because they have misread the revolutionaries of to-day no longer appeal to freedom. They appeal to the 'State', which they confuse with 'society', and they establish a dictatorship of the Left or of the Right.<sup>1</sup> True, they stoutly maintain that they are only increasing government power in the interests of promoting freedom, when, by the waving of some magic wand, the State will wither away. But they forget the biological fact that means condition ends and do not realize what mentalities they are creating.<sup>2</sup> The struggle is not *for* Power, as John Strachey fondly thinks, but *against* Power, and it is as organic evolution itself. Whoever controls rent, controls human destiny, whether as commissar in the totalitarian states or as plutocrat capitalist in the West.

The reason why people do not see how Fascism and Marxism, not to mention 'capitalism', have gone off the biological mainline is probably due to two psychological mechanisms.

<sup>1</sup> Albert Jay Noch, *Our Enemy the State*. Walter Lippman, *The Good Society*.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. the bureaucratic.



1. The fact that in abstract thinking material arguments will not as a rule be accepted. The abstract and the ideal are merely and remote, and such a sordid science as economics seems too vulgar to be considered philosophically.

2. On the other hand, those who descend to economics and materialistic argument always want short returns as a sort of reaction against idealism.

Now the point of view I put forward here offers nothing for to-morrow of a materially pleasant kind, and for the distant future not an other-worldly ideal, but an economically free world. Thus it pleases neither the Marxist, who wants Utopia to-morrow, nor the religious idealist, who wants a transcendent God. This being the case, I can only make it clear to the few that nothing is coming for the next century but constant exploitation and recurrent revolutions, until slowly and painfully mankind returns to the law of nature.

In conclusion there is this. Once Power is granted (i.e. the State laying down laws instead of nature), no amount of juggling with terms will bring freedom. 'A bureaucracy favourable to art' is a contradiction in terms. It is a mistake to think that because Stalin has turned bureaucratic Trotsky could have done better. In both cases the machine makes the man. It is again a mistake to think that culture can be 'organized' any more than (free) trade can be 'organized'. We might just as well try to organize the circulation of the blood. Remove blockage and the world will follow its own (innate) laws of freedom.<sup>1</sup> There is only one fight, and that the fight against Power.

<sup>1</sup> The laws of the (immanent) God

ALFRED PERLÈS

## I LIVE ON MY WITS

HENRY had gone on a three-month trip to America, and stayed in his studio in Villa Borghese. When Henry can find a paying lodger he always lets me stay in his place while he's away; it's a kind of tacit agreement between us.

It was a nice place—a large studio with adjacent bedroom and bathroom; and a little kitchenette. The first thing I did after I had moved in was to examine the larder. There were some sardine tins left, two packages of spaghetti and a small bottle of ketchup. I had to live on that for the next three months.

I have no income and I am too dumb to do any kind of remunerative work. That's why I call myself a writer. It requires no special knowledge and sounds good, a respectable profession, on a French identity card.

Henry was a bit worried about me when he left. He would have given me a little money, but he was short himself. At the last minute he did fork out fifty francs, though, because there was a gas bill due, he said. At the station he lavished his advice on me:

'Why don't you stick to Boris?' he said. 'I know you lack his guts, but he's got plenty of dough. Handle him diplomatically. Flatter him. Tell him what a wonderful writer he is. Don't be bashful, praise him to the bones. You can't do it in too thickly.'

'That bastard!' I muttered.

'What of it?' said Henry. 'You want to eat, don't you?'

Whereupon he boarded the boat train, leaving me in a rather desolate mood at the platform of the Gare St. Lazare.

I took the bus back to Villa Borghese. On my way home I thought things over. Things weren't so bad. I had a place to sleep in for three months and fifty francs in my pocket. The gas bill could wait. In the worst case the gas company would sever their connections with me. Worse than that had happened to me before.

Henry was probably right, I considered, I would have

play up to Boris. Naturally, I didn't like the idea. Boris was in pain in the neck. But he was rich. He had made a lot of money in Shanghai selling American patent medicines to the Chinese. That was before Shanghai was razed by the Japs. For a long time he was worried about what to do with his dough. He did not want to invest it in stocks. He had lost a fortune in the '29 slump, and was scared. At last he decided to purchase with half his money a gold ingot weighing forty-five pounds, almost his own weight. The rest of his money he kept in a dollar account with an American bank. He also owned the house on Villa Borghese where Henry lived. Boris himself occupied the ground floor.

As for the gold ingot, he naturally did not keep it in Villa Borghese. If he had done so I would probably have murdered him and stolen his gold. He must have had an inkling of the danger he was in: he took his ingot by airplane to London and deposited it in a safe in the Bank of England. From that time on he felt safe. He was determined not to touch his gold reserve. Every once in a while when he felt a great was coming to him he went to London on a cheap round trip ticket to say, 'how do you do?' to his ingot and caress it tenderly.

I invested twenty francs of the gas money in bread, red wine and liver sausage, and went home. Boris was already lying in wait for me in the hall.

'Hello, Michael,' he said, cheerfully. 'Seen Henry off? I'm having a bite of lunch now. Want to join me? I'd like you to glance over an essay on "The Climate of Metaphysics"'. Come in and have a bite, anyhow.'

I said I was busy, had to write a few urgent letters, begging letters, I specified. 'I'll slip one under your door later in the day,' I grinned. The fact of the matter was that I was determined to have my lunches without Boris as long as I could afford to.

Boris was disappointed, but didn't insist. 'All right,' he said, 'maybe we'll have dinner together.'

We didn't have dinner together that day. I had a compact liver sausage and red wine lunch all by myself, and felt good afterwards. I took a nap, and when I woke up it was time for dinner. I had still thirty francs left, so I treated myself to a

fairly good dinner at the Escargot, going to a movie afterwards.

The next day I was broke. Around lunch time I knocked at Boris's door. He was a late riser and only just getting up. He opened the door and stood in the doorway stretching himself. He wore a greasy brown dressing-gown over his naked body. I picked him up under his armpits and lifted him into the air. He weighed about as much as a twelve-year-old child. Then I put him down again. He kept stretching himself. With his goatee and wild hair he looked any age from thirty to sixty, like a demented prophet.

'You seem to be in fine fettle,' he said. 'I've got my own trouble again. Look over the manuscript while I take a bath.'

'What are we having for lunch?' I said.

'What do you mean—lunch?' he said. 'I haven't had my breakfast yet.'

'I've had mine five hours ago,' I said.

'And you're hungry again?' he said reproachfully.

'Starving,' I said.

Boris was anxious for me to read his manuscript, and knew that the only way of making me do so was to feed me first. He made a rapid mental calculation and came to the conclusion that it wouldn't cost very much.

'All right,' he said. 'Go out and do the shopping. You cook my breakfast and your lunch while I get dressed. Will ten francs be enough?'

'Make it fifteen,' I said.

'I'll make it twelve,' he said. 'But get me some nice bacon and eggs.'

He fumbled in his dressing-gown pocket and extracted a twenty-franc coin. 'I want eight francs back,' he said.

'O.K.,' I said. 'Hurry up with your bath, I'll be back in no time, or sooner.'

He opened the door for me. I was already half-way down the street when I heard him shouting after me. 'Michael! Michael!'

'What is it?' I yelled.

'Get me the best quality eggs,' he shouted.

'O.K.,' I yelled back.

I bought myself two nice lamb chops and a small tin



en peas; also a slice of Rocquefort cheese with lots of  
en in it, and an apple tart. Then I went to the dairy and  
a couple of cheap preserved eggs for Boris, and two thin  
hers of bacon. All in all I spent eight francs fifty, which  
me with three and a half francs pin money.

Boris was already dressed when I got back. He wore a tail  
t and striped pants, which made him look like a rabbinical  
dent. He waved the manuscript at me. 'How do you like  
s sentence?' he said: "The weather is what we make it".'  
e evidently was determined to get his money's worth.

I spent twelve francs and a half,' I said.

I said twelve francs,' he said. He sounded slightly hurt.  
I handed him eight francs. 'I contribute the fifty centimes  
t of my own pocket,' I said.

He was still slightly hurt. 'I don't want you to do that,'  
said. 'Here, take that fifty centimes.'

But I refused to accept the money. I spent the next ten  
utes in the kitchen cooking my lunch and Boris's break-  
t. Boris, oblivious of my doings, read the introduction to  
'Climate of Metaphysics' to me. I didn't mind.

Where do you keep the can-opener?' I said.

You know perfectly well that I am not concerned with  
se things,' he said crossly. And he read another sentence  
me.

'That's a magnificent line,' I said. 'Read it again, will  
n?'

Boris was warming up to me. 'I'm glad you get the point,'  
said. But do you really? What I really mean is this——'  
d he told me what he really meant.

You couldn't have put it clearer,' I said. 'Haven't you  
any salt and pepper?'

'Damn the salt and pepper!' he said. 'Now, listen to  
s one——'

Lunch is ready,' I said. 'We'll go over the manuscript  
erwards.'

'We must go over it point by point,' he said. 'I want to  
ke sure that the thought is expressed clearly. You can  
p me a lot by just restating my ideas in other words. We  
st go over it point by point.'

'Point by point,' I said.

We settled down to the food and I ate with great relish. The lamb chops were excellent, tender and delicious, almost melting at the touch of the tongue. The peas were sweet French to the core. Boris's eggs looked a bit anæmic; I smelled them every once in a while, asking me if they looked all right to me. I told him they were laid only a couple of hours ago by the best Norman pedigree hens, didn't you know a thing about eggs?'

As soon as the meal was over Boris reverted to the subject of the 'Climate of Metaphysics'. 'You can wash the dishes afterwards,' he said leniently. I knew I would have to do so dearly for the lunch.

As he had warned me, we went over the manuscript point by point. I had to interpret every comma and semicolon for him. 'You know, a sentence of such subtlety changes its sense according to whether the comma is placed before or after the metempsychosis or after catharsis,' he would point out to me every now and then. I agreed with him whole-heartedly. 'One can't be too careful to make his point clear,' I would say, adding, 'That's just what I like about your writing. You always hit the nail straight on the head. No ambiguity, no redundancy, no euphemism. You put it as clear as a bell.'

Boris beamed. I kept rubbing it in. Without discretion I compared him to Kant and Spengler and Shakespeare and made it quite clear that I considered him the greatest genius of all times. I said so in so many words and he made me repeat it. A gendarme might have blushed at all that praise but not Boris. Boris was thick-skinned. He wanted me to praise him more, and I did. He couldn't get enough of it. He loved himself so much that no one could possibly love him more. He felt that my praise was only an approximation of what was coming to him.

Every now and then, when I got sore at myself for not telling him point blank what a low bastard I thought he was, I would quibble with him over the position of a punctuation mark. 'There is something too emphatically unphilosophical about that exclamation mark,' I would say. That got him worried. He began arguing back and forth till I got weary and said maybe the exclamation mark was quite justified. Then he was happy. We continued to the next point. A

for an hour or so he would come back to the exclamation mark and decide that it was indeed a bit too unphilosophically emphatic. And he changed it to a full stop. It took us the whole afternoon to get through with Pointe of the 'Climate of Metaphysics'. There were twenty-seven points altogether which, if cleverly exploited, would hold me three meals a day for twenty-seven days. And there was no good reason why it shouldn't be for twenty-seven years. Boris did not mind feeding me for as long as I was capable of heaping praise on him. I soon found out that he was in no hurry to go on with the book. All he wanted was praise, eulogy, flattery. If it took me six hours to praise one single sentence of the masterpiece, it was O.K. with him. What he liked particularly was when I referred him, in substantiation of my argument, to one of his own sentences. His eyes, cunning and bloodshot like a rat's, watered with gratitude whenever I quoted his own phrase. And I kept quoting him as a seminarist might quote passages from the sermon on the Mount. On days when I felt a bit weary of praising him, it was pork chops. And when I was in fine fettle and kept rattling off quotation after quotation from 'Climate of Metaphysics', it was porterhouse steak and paragus. In the end I quoted him according to my appetite and bowel movements.

Being a tight bastard, as I implied before, Boris never took me to a restaurant. I had to do the shopping and cooking myself. On days when he was pleased with me he forked out twenty francs for the dinner; on other days, from between twelve and fifteen. Naturally, I always made a little pin money. I knew the shopkeepers and I knew what to buy. At the butcher's I always asked for two different kinds of meat—one for Boris and the other for myself. For myself I usually got a nice cut of rumpsteak or a couple of lamb chops, and for Boris a slice of horse meat. He never noticed the difference. I rather liked that about him. Gastronomically speaking, he was a real saint. Nor did he have any taste for wine. A good Burgundy could never inspire him as much as an inverted comma in the right place.

For awhile everything was fine and I was growing fat on my wits. Unfortunately, a man needs not only food but also

a little cash. The pin money I made was just enough for cigarettes, and at the end of the week the laundry bill began to worry me. Laundry, in France, is an item you have to pay for in cash. You can't owe it like a gas bill. My laundry bill wasn't very high, just twenty-five francs. I knocked on Boris's door, asking him nonchalantly if he could lend me twenty-five francs. He said he could easily do that if he wanted to but he didn't want to. He said we were too good friends to let money come between us. He gave me a long talk, like that guy in *Hamlet*, about the inconvenience of borrowing and lending, and so forth.

I went upstairs to my rooms to give the matter some more thought. That evening I did not knock at Boris's door for dinner. I had still some spaghetti left and I cooked it. I hoped Boris would feel my absence and get lonely and miserable.

'Why didn't you come down last night?' he asked when he walked into his studio for my second breakfast. 'I meant to take you out to dinner at Lapérouse's, and to a movie afterwards.'

I knew that line. He always wants to give me a wonderful time when I don't show up. He was only just trying to make me feel I missed something, because he was sore as hell that I had given him the slip.

'Too bad,' I said lightly. 'I had to spend the evening with my friend, Josephine Baker. I've been rather neglecting you of late. By the way,' I added, suppressing a yawn, 'would you like to make a couple of hundred bucks?'

There were two sides to Boris. On the one hand, he was the tedious, hair-splitting pseudo-philosopher sitting for hours on end plagiarizing some forgotten Latin author; on the other, he was the tight, voracious, avaricious, money-grabbing bastard whom I was determined to worry and torture till he begged me to stop.

'How can *you* tell me how to make two hundred dollars when you knew how, why don't *you* make it *yourself*?' When Boris gets excited his speech is full of italics, like the Old Testament.

'Well, it requires a little capital,' I said calmly. 'My checking account is temporarily slightly overdrawn. But there's no reason why I shouldn't let you in. After all, we're friends, aren't we?'



There was a glint of suspicion in his eyes. 'Shoot,' he said.

'Go to your brokers and buy one hundred shares of Consolidated Gas, on margin,' I said. 'They'll be up two points to-morrow.'

Boris guffawed: 'Stocks! Stocks!' he ejaculated. 'What *you* know about stocks? Listen, Michael, I know the game, and I know you can't win. Haven't I been through it '29? Haven't I lost a *whole fortune*? Listen, Michael, what you don't know about the Market isn't worth knowing. *Lay off stocks!*'

'Don't get so excited about it,' I said soothingly. 'I just bought two hundred dollars might come in handy, but naturally, you don't have to act on the suggestion. Forget about it.'

But Boris could not easily forget about it. He had enough money to live on comfortably for the rest of his life, but his instinct for adding to his pile was aroused. He was evidently disturbed. And he said so.

'Why do you worry me?' he said. 'Why should I take any risk to make a *paltry* two hundred dollars? I wish you wouldn't talk to me about the Market, it gets me worried. Besides, how can *you* know Gas will be up two points to-morrow? Why not six points down? Where do you get your inside information from? Rockefeller himself couldn't tell that much. Are you clairvoyant by any chance?'

'Come, come, Boris, calm yourself,' I said. 'I'm sorry I mentioned it to you. Don't get worried, really.'

'But *how* can you know to-morrow's Stock Exchange quotations?' he insisted. 'If you could, why, Michael, you'd be a rich man. Tell me, Michael, what *do* you know about

Naturally, I didn't tell him that I knew absolutely nothing about it. The only thing I knew about the Market was what everybody else knew about it, namely, that stocks might either rise or fall. It was a fifty-fifty chance. And I had nothing to lose. If Consolidated Gas was up two points the next day, as I claimed it would be, and Boris hadn't bought any, he would bitterly regret it. And if it were down six points, and he had bought any, he would regret it even more

bitterly. Both ways suited me fine. Boris could not have been tortured more excruciatingly.

'I just happen to know that Consolidated Gas will be to-morrow,' I said mysteriously.

'Shut up!' he said rudely.

'All right,' I said. 'Let's talk about the "Climate Metaphysics"'. I didn't quite like that phrase of yours about the chthonian mind. It's been worrying me all night. It wasn't as crystal clear as I would have liked you to state.

Boris reluctantly reverted to the subject of the 'Climate'. But his heart wasn't in it. He was distraught, perturbed. Unable to concentrate. Every once in a while he made a queer, off-key remark. He made a great effort to refrain from asking me any more questions about my inside knowledge of the workings of the Stock Exchange. Naturally, I didn't make things easier for him. Never breathed another word about Wall Street.

To add physical discomfort to his mental agony, I gave him a piece of cat's meat for dinner. With spinach. But he chewed the meat gloomily, he was definitely restless.

At the end of the dinner he said: 'What about a movie to-night? Or shall we get drunk? I feel like a bit of relaxation. What do you say? Naturally, you're my guest.'

'Sorry, Boris,' I said; 'I've an important date to-night.'

I didn't have a date, but I knew Boris would be much more miserable if I deprived him of my company. I'm a good Samaritan with him.

'A woman?' said Boris. 'Give her the slip.'

'Can't,' I said; 'I need a little relaxation myself.' And I left him.

When I got back to the Villa Borghese I saw that the light in Boris's place was still on. I peeped through his keyhole and saw him pacing up and down the huge studio. He wore a greasy brown dressing-gown which made him look like an emaciated Franciscan monk. He was mumbling something to himself, I don't think it was a prayer.

Early next morning, some one was hammering frantically at my door. I had just been dreaming about Millicent, it was a good dream. I slipped on my dressing-gown

ened the door. It was Boris, desperately brandishing a copy of the Paris edition of the *New York Herald*.

'What the hell!' I said.

'It's up!' he cried. 'It's up!' There was hysteria in his voice.

'What's up?' I said. I am always a bit slow-witted in the morning.

'Consolidated Gas,' he cried. 'Up two points, just as I said.'

'Well, I knew it would be up, I told you so,' I said. 'That's no reason to wake me up at such an unearthly hour.' Boris was all shaky. I could tell from looking at him that he hadn't slept all night. He was on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

'I haven't slept a wink all night,' Boris said. 'My eye is double again, I guess. Listen, Michael. I'm sorry I didn't take your advice. I thought you were just trying to get me into trouble. How did you know it would be up?'

'Isn't it enough for you that I did know?' I said. 'Can't you let me have my little secrets?'

'Do you think it will be up again to-morrow?' he enquired anxiously. 'Would you advise me to take another chance?'

'Not on Consolidated Gas,' I said authoritatively. 'It's bound to be down three points and a half to-morrow.'

'Are you sure?' he asked naively.

'Absolutely,' I said.

'Well, in that case, why shouldn't I sell short?'

'Because my inspiration is of a more bullish nature. I don't believe in selling, I believe in buying.'

It was a stupid remark, and Boris, not being exactly a half-wit, obviously lost faith in my prognostics. 'You know nothing about the market,' he said; 'you're just guessing. No one can tell these things in advance.'

I took the *Herald* from his hands and glanced down the page. 'All right,' I said; 'just to prove to you that I do know something or two I'll say this much: Gas will be down to-morrow by three points and Electrical Supply will be a point and a-half up. I don't ask you to act on my information, just look at the paper to-morrow.'

'You're an idiot, Michael,' he said. 'If Electrical Supply

goes up, Consolidated Gas is bound to go up as well. They both utilities.'

'I've said it,' I said. 'Don't take my word for it, just wait and see.'

And with these words I gently pushed him out. I went back to bed, resuming the dream about Millicent. I always take up a dream where I leave off, it's one of my peculiarities.

When I saw Boris the next morning he was in a kind of coma. He handed me the *Herald* without saying a word. The paper was opened at the stock list. I had been right again. Consolidated Gas was down three points, and Electric Supply up one point and five-eighths. I looked at Boris. He wept.

'Don't worry,' I said gently. 'You can still make up for it. If I gave you a good tip, would you let me in fifty-fifty?'

'I would,' he breathed between two sobs. 'What shall I buy?'

'We'll go to your broker's together in the afternoon, and I'll tell you what to get. But first give me your word of honour that I'm in on it fifty-fifty.'

'It's hardly fair,' he said, 'since I have to take all the risk.'

'Yes or no,' I said.

'Yes,' he said.

So we went to Messrs. Cucux & Klan, Incorporated, in the afternoon. A big brokerage firm on the Boulevard des Capucines, near the Madeleine. Boris was well known there. He introduced me to Mr. Klan as an eminent poet. Mr. Klan smiled in a rather embarrassed way, he didn't quite know how to talk to a poet. I put him immediately at his ease.

'Put through a cable to your New York office, Klan,' I said. 'We're buying one hundred shares of Bethlehem Steel at the lowest market rates. Get me? We don't want to be gypped. We'll be waiting here for the confirmation from New York.'

Mr. Klan looked questioningly at Boris, but Boris merely smiled. 'It's O.K., Klan,' he said. 'My account. I just want my poet friend to have a crack at the game.'

'What sort of a broker are you, anyhow?' I said to Mr. Klan. 'Don't you offer your clients cigars?'

Mr. Klan offered us cigars. I gave mine to a page boy.



cause I never smoke cigars. We made ourselves comfortable on a deep leather couch opposite the quotation board and watched the electrically signalled figures dance before our eyes. For awhile Bethlehem Steel was stationary at  $45\frac{3}{8}$ ; then it dropped to  $44\frac{7}{8}$ . Boris gripped my arm: 'I've already lost nearly 100 bucks on your idea, you nit-wit,' he said. He was nervous. The next moment Bethlehem Steel was again at  $45\frac{3}{8}$ . 'So far you haven't lost a cent,' I said.

We had to wait nearly half an hour for the buying confirmation from New York. Mr. Klan came up to us with a smile.

'It's O.K.,' he said. 'You have your steel at 46.'

'What do you mean—46?' Boris snapped at him. 'It was never above  $45\frac{3}{8}$ .'

'O.K.,' I said. 'Cable to New York to sell at  $48\frac{1}{2}$ .'

We sat there another quarter of an hour watching the board. Bethlehem Steel climbed up to  $46\frac{3}{4}$  and dropped again to  $44\frac{1}{8}$ . Boris was panic-stricken. I dragged him away from the place when our stock was at 46.

We went to the Café de la Paix. Boris drank pernod. He was a bit feverish. The drinks went to his head right away and he talked a lot of rubbish. I thought of my laundry bill and humoured him.

The next morning I went out early and bought a copy of the *Herald*. Bethlehem Steel closed at  $47\frac{1}{2}$  in a fairly strong market. That didn't sound so bad. With a little luck we might be selling out during the next session.

Boris naturally was worried to death. I didn't expect him to be. It took all my persuasion to prevent him from telephoning an immediate selling order to Mr. Klan.

At three o'clock we went again to the broker's. Mr. Klan received us with a broad smile. The market, it seemed, had opened in a bullish mood. We sank comfortably into the deep leather seats and watched the board. The market was indeed going up. A page boy pasted several cables to the board. Good news. Dividends were being declared. All the stocks surged, but Bethlehem Steel seemed to be following the trend only reluctantly. For an hour the quotations fluctuated between 47 and 48. Boris was perspiring with

anxiety. I held his hand, to quieten him. And then, suddenly Bethlehem Steel flashed up:  $48\frac{1}{2}$ , 49,  $49\frac{7}{8}$ , 51,  $53\frac{3}{4}$ .

'You idiot!' shouted Boris. 'Asking him to sell at 48. You idiot!'

'I did it for your own sake,' I lied. 'I didn't want you die from nervous exhaustion.'

After awhile Mr. Klan came up to us, waving a cable like a flag: 'Your stock sold at  $48\frac{1}{2}$ ,' he said. 'Pretty good luck.'

'What about that hundred bucks, Boris?' I said. 'Better give it to me right away. I've got a laundry bill to meet.'

To my surprise Boris gave me the money immediately. Naturally, it must have pained him to fork out that much dough, but he did give it to me. With a sigh, it is true.

'It's a lot of dough,' he said.

'It's not more than you've made yourself,' I snapped back. 'To-night I'm going to treat you to a dinner. Come on, let's get out of this joint, let's have a drink. To-day everything on me.'

I gave Boris a royal treat. I was determined to sacrifice, necessary, half of my fortune, just to give him a lesson in hospitality. Maybe, I thought, he would be less miserly in the future. I even hoped that, seeing me lavish my generosity on him, he would repent his past stinginess, and never again count the change of fifteen francs.

To get Boris in high spirits I took him on a high-class pub-crawling expedition. We went to all the fashionable bars in the Opéra district: Harry's New York Bar, Castiglioni Bar, Fred Payne's. I made Boris stick to whisky and soda because whisky and soda was the most expensive drink. I even invited a girl for him and bought her drinks, too. She was a nice girl, blonde like star dust, and with a good waist line, the kind of girl Boris always liked and could never get. Germaine was her name. I let him have her all to himself.

I took Boris and Germaine to a swell restaurant on the Rue Royale. We were all three in fine fettle. Boris had worked up quite an appetite, a thing he had never done before. Perhaps because he knew that I was going to pay the bill. It was O.K. with me. A hundred dollars goes a long way in Paris, if one knows the ins and outs. I fed the bastard on wild duck and oranges. He did enjoy it. No surprise, after

horse and cat's meat I had been feeding him on these days.

After dinner Boris was in a languid, slightly lascivious mood. He liked the girl better and better, and he told her so. She was on her guard. When he went to the toilet for a minute, she said: 'Don't leave me alone with that worm. He gives me the creeps.' I told her she was old enough to take care of herself.

Boris suggested that I buy a bottle of Scotch and that we go back to the Villa Borghese. Germaine, hearing that I was living in the same place, agreed to come home with us. On the way back I stopped at a wine shop and bought two bottles of whisky. Boris was quite drunk, but I knew exactly what I was doing. I knew in particular how much money I had spent and how much I had left over. I still had nearly twenty-five bucks, enough to keep the pot boiling for awhile. We had quite a good time in the Villa Borghese. In less than an hour Boris was dead drunk. So drunk, in fact, he couldn't even declaim his 'Climate of Metaphysics', which he knew by heart. Germaine, too, seemed quite happy. Boris had slipped her a couple of hundred francs, to make sure of her affections. I had seen him giving her the dough. I bent over to him and whispered in his ear: 'Nothing doing, Boris, today you're my guest. Here, take the money back. Let me give you the girl.' And I fished two one-hundred franc notes out of my pocket and gave them to him. He was awfully touched.

We had been singing and drinking and playing the gramophone, and I was getting a bit tired. Boris, though on the verge of passing out, was glad when I departed. He wanted to enjoy Germaine privately. As I kissed her good-bye, I whispered into her ear that I would be waiting for her upstairs. 'Come up when you're through with him,' I said, 'don't think it'll take you long.'

I went upstairs and got undressed. I was rather tired and not hoping Germaine wouldn't come up. But I was hardly in bed when she walked into the room. She was furious.

'What's the idea leaving me with that worm!' she said. Fortunately he was too tight to bother me much. I just kissed

him good-night. Here's your two hundred francs. I took away from him.'

'Why don't you keep it?'

'Because it's your money and I don't want your money. I like you.'

So I let her like me till we both fell asleep.

I woke up bright and early, without the least hangover. I always feel fine after a good night's debauch. Whisky seems to have a soothing effect on my liver.

The girl, too, got up early. She looked quite attractive in daylight, and I began to like her. We had breakfast together and I made a date with her before she left.

As usual, I had my second breakfast with Boris. He, too, seemed to be feeling quite good. He was serene and contented. In a somewhat bragging mood.

'What a girl!' he said. 'The hottest piece of female flesh I've tasted in a long while. Passionate! Wild! Savage! A real tigress! She couldn't get enough! Only got through with her in an hour ago.'

He kept telling me at great length how much she had loved him. He even gave me a few lewd and graphic details. I listened to him for awhile without telling him what a good damn liar he was. After a few minutes he picked up the *Herald* and glanced over the stock list.

'Good God!' he cried. 'The market's down! There must have been a break right after we'd left. Bethlehem Stock closed 41!'

'I knew it,' I said. 'And I also know the market'll be up again to-morrow.'

'For heaven's sake, Michael!' Boris cried. 'Are you a sorcerer?'

'I just happen to know a thing or two,' I said modestly.

'Do you think I should take a crack at it again?'

'Why not?'

'What do you think I should buy this time?'

'Am I in on this again?' I asked. 'Fifty-fifty?'

'Listen, Michael, you can't expect me to share my hard-earned profits with you every time, can you?'

So that's the kind of bastard he was. After that feast I had given him, too. I thought of the drinks I had bought him



d the wild duck with oranges, and the girl I had let him ve, and everything.

'Maybe you're right, Boris,' I said. 'I'm just insatiable. nyhow, this time you play the market yourself. If you want make a quick profit, get some Amalgamated Copper. hey're sure to be up four points by to-morrow. Get two ndred shares. That'll leave you with a profit of eight ndred dollars. It's all yours. I'll let you buy me a good eal, though. What about it?'

He did not say that he was going to buy me a good meal, just kept mumbling, 'Amalgamated Copper. Amalgamated Copper.'

He was a bit restless for the remainder of the morning, t refrained from making any comments. We went over the 'limate of Metaphysics', then we had lunch. After lunch, oris said he had to go downtown to attend some urgent usiness of his own. I did not ask him where he was going, cause I knew. It was O.K. with me. I only hoped he would t stung properly.

And so he did. The next morning when I came down to eakfast he looked pale and thin.

'What's the matter?' I said. 'eye trouble again?'

'Amalgamated Copper,' he said.

'What about it?' I said.

'Down three points,' he said.

'Why, did you buy any?' I said.

'I took three hundred shares,' he cried desperately. 'At ur suggestion! I've lost nine hundred dollars! At your ggestion!'

'I only suggested that you buy two hundred shares,' I id, trying in vain to conceal my satisfaction. 'I hope you're lding on to it for a while. Never sell in a panicky market.'

'*I am* going to sell to-day,' he cried. 'There may be a real ump, another '29. I've seen stocks, gilt-edged ones, blue obon ones, drop from 400 to zero. Why did you let me o it, Michael, you're a friend!'

'Don't worry, Boris, everything'll turn out O.K., you'll e. Let's take up Point 23 of the "Climate". I don't think u should mention Spinoza with regard to the *Zohar*.

Spinoza is first and foremost a scientist, he's not concerned with the Cabala.'

'To hell with the Cabala!' Boris screamed. 'I'm going to the broker's.'

'O.K.,' I said. 'Want me to come along with you?'

'What for? What can *you* do?' he cried savagely.

'I can hold your hand,' I said.

There was pandemonium in the offices of Messrs. Cuc & Klan, Inc. We arrived there in time for the opening of the market. It was a decidedly bearish market, threatening to degenerate any moment into a landslide. I enjoyed the atmosphere intensely. Most of the clients looked haggard and crestfallen. The last few days' rise had made them anticipate another boom, and they had all been buying stock frantically. Now they were tearing their hair out. The general mood was distinctly reminiscent of the Wailing Wall. I felt that before the session was over they would be tearing their clothes and putting ashes on their heads.

'How's Amalgamated?' Boris shouted at Klan as he entered the place.

But Mr. Klan had other worries than Boris's Amalgamated Copper. He looked as if he had speculated heavily with the clients' money. 'I'm a lost man,' he wailed, wiping the tears from his cheek. 'A lost man!'

'What about the copper?' Boris yelled at him.

'To hell with your copper,' Mr. Klan shrieked. 'It's all down. Everything's down. Why should I worry about your copper?'

Boris glanced at the board. The figures were rapidly falling. Bethlehem Steel, which we had sold at  $48\frac{1}{2}$ , was at 47. Amalgamated Copper was fast losing ground. In less than ten minutes it slipped from 40 to 32. And it was still slipping. Boris yelled to Klan:

'Sell my stock immediately! Cable to New York!'

'No one's buying, everybody's selling,' said Mr. Klan. 'I'll put in your order, though.'

'I'll kill myself,' Boris screamed.

'Go ahead,' said Mr. Klan. 'The window's open. Jump. The ambulance's waiting for you downstairs. You'll be the fourth.'

We sat opposite the board watching the figures slump. I was the only serene person in the place. I had nothing to lose. It gave me an immense kick to see all these vultures around me lose their pants. They groaned and cried and wept, panic-stricken, like the passengers in a shipwreck. Boris was a pitiful sight. Every time Amalgamated Copper dropped a point his mouth twitched. It was already down to 29. A rapid mental calculation showed me that he had lost 9,000 dollars. He wasn't broke yet, though. He still had 15,000 dollars in the bank, I knew, not counting the gold ingot in the Bank of England.

When things were at their very worst there seemed to be a reaction in Wall Street. Short sellers were probably buying back. Bethlehem Steel rose from 29 to 34 in five minutes. Boris began to worry about another thing.

'I hope they haven't sold in the falling market,' he prayed aloud with a look heavenwards. 'Hi, Klan! Cancel the selling order. Cable them to wait!'

'I can send another cable if you wish me to,' said Mr. Klan, 'but I'm afraid it's too late. They're sure to have sold already.'

'Don't argue with me. Cable!' shouted Boris.

'O.K.,' said Mr. Klan, signalling to the telegraph clerk. Stocks were still going up. Bethlehem Steel was fast recuperating. Soon it had climbed up to 41. 'My God,' muttered Boris, 'my God, I hope they haven't sold at 29.'

'You scoundrel!' Boris insulted Klan. 'I told you not to sell. You made me lose 9,000 dollars. You scoundrel!'

But Mr. Klan was not easily insulted. He merely smiled calmly: 'What's 9,000 bucks?' he said. 'I wish I'd lost only 1000 bucks. I'm a lost man, a lost man.'

I had hoped Boris would lose a little more, but 9,000 dollars wasn't so bad, after all. It wouldn't kill him, anyway. Considering everything, he got off quite cheaply, I figured. Nevertheless I had the decency to leave him alone for the rest of the day. He was mourning his loss. No, I didn't rub it in . . .

The next day when I went downstairs for my second breakfast, Boris had left. There was a note for me pinned to

his door, informing me he had gone to London for a few days. He would be back on Friday.

I knew what he was going to do in London. Take the bull by the horns, go to the Bank of England and say, 'how do you do?' to the gold ingot. And caress it tenderly. That bastard!

ARTHUR CALDER-MARSHALL

## THE NOVELS OF B. TRAVEN

Nobody knows who B. Traven really is. And this is the author's wish, as spokesman of the anonymous, who lives below security and beyond the limit of justice. He is nameless, Traven or Truth his pseudonym. All that we know is that he was born in the United States (probably Wisconsin) and now lives somewhere in the state of Vera Cruz, Mexico. No one knows that he has seen Traven.

His appeal, like John Steinbeck's, is widespread. It refutes the favourite argument of intellectuals, whose combination of self-interest and introversion isolates them within a narrow clique, that no great contemporary artist can achieve popular recognition in our time.

Five of Traven's novels have been published in England. One, *The Death Ship*, is about the sea. The others, *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, *The Carreta*, *Government of the Dead*, *The Bridge in the Jungle*, are concerned with different aspects of Mexican life, to-day or in the time of Porfirio Diaz.

*The Death Ship*, the story of an American sailor as it is subtitled, has a strange history. Traven resented the ballyhoo of American publishers, who treat literature as a commercial product like radios or rayon underwear. He refused to allow the book to appear in the U.S.A.



Instead, it was first published in Germany, under the title *Totenschiff*. Its sarcastic contempt for Allied war aims, he, ensured it success. It sold 228,000 copies before it was forbidden in March 1933. Six months later it was released in and began to sell steadily until the Nazis, reading the favourable reviews the book received in British papers, dropped down the ban finally in March 1934.

Forbidden in Germany, *Das Totenschiff* was translated into other languages and published in fifteen different countries. In April 1935, sales had reached 1,650,000 copies in the Soviet Union alone.

In the spring of 1934, Messrs. Chatto & Windus published a translation of *Das Totenschiff* by Eric Sutton. But though the gist of the original survived, the differences between the translation and Traven's original were astonishing. Mr. Sutton's *Death Ship*, from an academic point of view, is better English. It is more grammatical, for one thing. There are fewer dirty words. The colloquialisms are those favoured by literature as colloquial.

Traven's original is unique. The style appears artless. Its syntax is American, but used as a foreigner might use it. The thought is middle European, having affinities with Capek's *The Good Soldier Schweik*.

'Damn it, damn it all, and devil and hell. Now, listen here, you from Sconsin, that pest *Yorikke* cannot get you. Not you. And all the Consuls neither. Chin up and get at it. Swallow the filth and digest it. Quickest way to get rid of it. Some day there'll be soap and brushes again, and plenty of them. Be it New Orleans or Galveston or Los An. All the filth is only on the outside. Don't let it go to your soul and spirit and your heart. Make the plunge head-first. That way you'll feel the cold less. Get now away from the railing and away from that beast that is after you. Kick him right in the pants. Sock it right in the ear-hole. Spit it out and do it well. Spitting out the filth and feeling it in your throat is all you can do now. But make a good use of it. Now back into your bunk.'

This, the original, reads more like a translation than the translation. The style is at the same time colloquial and

mannered. It is American as she was never spoke. Bombast is deliberately used in order not to impress; rhetoric to minimize, not magnify, horror. Over-statement is employed consciously as a form of underwriting.

The translation of this passage reads:

'No, chap, grin and get on with it. The *Torikke* shan't do you down; nor the Consuls either. Nor Mister bloody D. You're from New Orleans, chap. Never mind the stink. It don't count. Stick it and stand up. Sock the swine on the nose if he tries to do you down. Now for a spot of sleep.'

The text got slimmer on its trip to Germany and became slimmer and weaker and more conventional.

The story of *The Death Ship* is very simple. An American sailor loses his boat at Antwerp and with it his papers. He goes to the Consul, but cannot prove his identity. Hereafter forward he is a man without a country, pushed across frontiers at midnight by customs officials, unable to get boat, passport, or national status, the touchstone of the insane nationalisms fanned by the war fought for the self-determination of small nations. Ejected from Belgium to Holland, Germany, France and Spain, he makes the bum's Grand Tour. The idealistic professions of politicians, priests and publicists may horrify the visiting journalist. But the bum experiences, while the journalist is instructed, sees prison conditions behind bars and knows the labour market from bellyache and statistics.

Traven covers indignation with an urchin jeer. The soul of his creation is bitterness at the contrast between the facade of humanitarianism and the insanitary structure of greed and corruption it conceals. Gibes, exaggeration, and the cynic hobo-shrug make humorous, and so tolerable, injustices, stupidity and evil which could not otherwise be borne.

In Spain, still without papers, the sailor gets a job as trimmer on a Death Ship, one of those antique hulks which operate at a profit only by wage-cuts and gun-running, trafficking in dope and illicit emigrants and the final deliberate foundering to collect insurance.

The crews of death ships are the outcasts of the mercantile marine, men who have lost their papers, nationality and

ver to claim consular protection. They are the lost men of sea, whose ties with land have been cut for ever, unable to jump ship in port or protest on the high sea. Among them, the outcasts, the worst paid, the most down-trodden, the hardest worked, are the trimmers, from whom Traven selects his two main characters.

His sympathy flows naturally to the dog that is under-trodden. He is not, like Henry Miller, interested in the undercurrent, the scrounger and failure. He is concerned with work, the hard, efficient, courageous, sweated labour. He represents, as no other writer has ever done, the protesting complexity of the modernistic cynicism, dreams, humour and endurance of the anonymous wage coolie.

On the death ship, the *Yorikke*, patriotism and individualism do not exist. What tradition there is, is the ship's own, fashioned from the misery of her crew, a culture of common degradation such as African slaves evolved on the plantations.

'Only the skipper spoke English that was without flaw. A professor of Oxford could not have spoken it any better. But the pidgin spoken by the rest was such that Chinese pidgin English would be considered elegant compared with the Yorikkian English. A newcomer, even a limey, a cockney or a Pat, would have quite a lot of trouble before he could pick up sufficient Yorikkian to make himself understood and to understand what was told him.'

The *Yorikke* evolved its lingua franca, not basic English, but the pooled vocabulary of its cosmopolitan crew. 'Since usually one fireman at least was a Spaniard, it had become proper to use for water and fuel never any other words but *agua* and *carbón*.'

Traven formed his style to fit the *Yorikke*. It is a highly particularized idiom, harsh, disjointed, foreign-tanged, unnecessarily verbose at times, literary and romantic, at others rubbing with the maggots on the dungheap. But at all times it is flexible, expressing nuances like the angular features of an individual actor. The very character of the endless sailor is conveyed in the style. As the story wanders through dissertations on nationalism, customs officers, the

causes of war, the profit system or the Soviet Union, with a disregard for plot or design almost as insouciant as Stern Traven builds, piece by piece, the structure of the anonymous trimmer, that filthy-looking cutthroat hanging around wharves, resigned but defiant, insubordinate but mutinous, sweating blood to keep the boilers fired and overtime paid, rebellious yet accepting fate, thieving, cheating but not treacherous.

Savage humour, the caricature of suffering, the mysterious sense of man's relation to his work, the interplay of poetry and coarseness and a continual shifting of the plane of meaning, whereby anger slides into satire and satire into despair, make *The Death Ship* one of the great novels of the sea. Traven portrays his sailors without recourse to the storm-thunder Conrad invoked. Where Hanley, stressing only discomfort, exploitation and 'the personal insult', makes his characters whine, Traven's round characters can suffer and laugh, dream, swindle and endure.

Traven's Mexican novels have the same authenticity as *The Death Ship*. Traven's interest passes from the humble trimmer on the lousiest craft to the poorest, belaboured peon or waggon driver (*The Carreta*), the traffic in debtors to the lumber camps (*Government*), the death of a small boy in a remote Indian village (*The Bridge in the Jungle*), or the American bums, down and out in Tampico, setting out on a prospect for gold (*The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*).

Traven still despises straight narrative, partly because a strange country like Mexico demands explanation to the reader, but mostly because he loves a good digression. His chapters, subdivided into short sections, sometimes violate every rule formulated by novelists since 1800. A virulent exposure of the Catholic Church may succeed an ironic account of the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz and be followed by a detailed description of a trick played by a wagoner to get a rise of a farthing a day, how Mexicans cook rice, or the custom in Pebvil of making the newly elected chief sit with his trousers down over a pot of blazing charcoal while his speeches are made in his honour.

Only three English writers have succeeded in describing Mexico accurately. Señora Calderon de la Barca, the Scott



e of a Spanish ambassador in the nineteenth century, te with intelligence and observation. Charles Flandrau, *Viva Mexico*, caught the humour of Mexicans, Indians, ericans, English and Spaniards with delightful wit. But y Traven, with his instinctive sympathy for the oppressed, succeeded in portraying the harshness and irony of xican life, the corruption of bosses, political and com- cial, the simplicity and fatalism of the Indians, their ongruous mixture of dignity and humour, which in *The dge in the Jungle* he symbolizes in the cortège carrying body of the drowned boy to the cemetery, singing as a eral march, 'It ain't goin' to rain no mo'.

*The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* is the best known of the xican novels. This is understandable, because the main racters are American and the narrative is a very exciting, istic adventure story. *The Bridge in the Jungle*, a simple eticulously observed and delicately written novelette, *Government*, a satire on corruption under Diaz, are er books.

t is difficult to quote from Traven, however, because the y of his imagination plays not with phrase or metaphor incident. Scenes, not images, linger in the memory, drew meeting Estrellita in the plaza in *The Carreta*, the a diving for the drowned boy's body and the detectionandle, in *The Bridge in the Jungle*, the prospectors be- quered by bandits and the train robbery in *The Treasure e Sierra Madre*, the assassination of the *casique* of Pebvil *Government*, this last, even in translation, ranking as one he most dramatic scenes in literature.

Traven is a great enough writer to break the rules a ubert sets himself. His range of character and emotion is y wide. Though he is by no means merely a reporter, a lity common to all his work is authenticity. I have seen ggested that he appeals to a vast public, because even his ism, concerned with the remote, death ships and Mexico, form of escape. His subject matter is not popular with ling libraries. In the five novels there is only one short e story, and the heroine of that has lice in her hair. There no success stories, unless it is success to make a small

fortune selling indebted peons and Indians into the slave of mahogany camps.

It seems to me more likely that in our time of exile, persecution and insecurity, Traven's respect for human dignity is heartening. No matter how harassed, how degraded in the economic scale, Traven's characters may be, they retain and to a certain extent by reason of, adversity, the qualities we admire, courage, tenderness, selflessness, endurance. Men and women, pursued by poverty, the tallyman, and fear of unemployment, can draw reassurance from the survival of the trimmer, the peon and the waggoner, more pressed by fate but still unbeaten. Traven may be said to have effected the synthesis of the goodness desiderated by a Frank Richards and the truth demanded by an Orwell.

### *Bibliography*

Four novels were published by Chatto & Windus in translation: *The Death Ship*, translated by Eric Sutton; *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, *The Carreta* and *Governments* by Basil Creighton.

In 1940, Jonathan Cape took over Traven's copyright and began to issue his collected works in the original version. *The Death Ship* and *The Bridge in the Jungle* have already appeared. Others will be published at short intervals. Comparison of the two texts suggests that readers would do well to await the originals.

W. H. AUDEN

# SPRING IN WARTIME

O season of repetition and return,  
Of light and the primitive visions of light,  
    Opened in little ponds disturbing  
    The blind water that conducts excitement,

How lucid the image in your shining well  
Of a limpid day, how eloquent your streams  
    Of lives without language, the cell  
    manœuvres and the molecular bustle.

O hour of images when we sniff the herb  
Of childhood and forget who we are and dream  
    Like whistling boys of the vast spaces  
    Of the Inconsistent racing towards us

With all its appealing private detail. But  
Our ways are revealing; crossing the legs  
    Or resting the cheek in the hand, we  
    Hide the mouths through which the Disregarded

Will always enter. For we know we're not boys  
And never will be; part of us all hates life,  
    And some are completely against it.  
Spring leads the truculent sailors into

The park, and the plump little girls, but none  
Are determined like the tiny brains who found  
    The great communities of Summer;  
    Only in hospitals, where the dying

With low voices and not very much to say,  
Repair the antique silence the insects broke  
    In an architectural passion,  
    Can Night return to our cooling fibres.

O not even War can frighten us enough,  
That last attempt to eliminate the Strange  
By uniting us all in a terror  
Of something known; even that's a failure

Which cannot stop us taking our walks alone,  
Scared of the unknown unconditional dark,  
Down the avenues of our longing.  
For, however they dream they are scattered,

Our bones cannot help reassembling themselves  
Into the philosophic city where dwells  
The knowledge they cannot get out of;  
And neither a Spring nor a War can ever

So condition his ears as to keep the song  
That is not a sorrow from the Double Man.  
O what weeps is the love that hears, an  
Accident occurring in his substance.

STEPHEN SPENDER

## THE DROWNED

They still vibrate with the sound  
Of electric bells  
As slowly they drown  
Whose mouths and eyes fill  
With wells of silence  
And horizons of distance.

Kate and Mary were that city  
Where they lingered on shore  
To mingle with the beauty  
Of the girls who still are  
Where no dumbness appals  
Dance halls and bar.



Here no letters arrive  
And there is no telephone  
Cold tides cut the nerves  
The desires are frozen  
While the blurred sky  
Rubs bitter medals on the eyes.

They see her with another  
And they know how she smiles  
At the light facile rival  
Who so easily beguiles  
Dancing and doing  
What they never will now.

Cut off unfairly  
By the doom of doom  
Which makes heroes and serious  
Skulls of them all  
Where under waves they roll  
Whose one thought was to play  
And forget death all day.

LAURIE LEE

## POEM

The evening, the heather,  
the unsecretive cuckoo  
and butterflies in their disorder;  
not a word of war as we lie,  
our mouths in a hot nest  
and the flowers advancing.

Does a hill defend itself,  
does a river run to earth  
to hide its quaint neutrality?  
A boy is shot with England in his brain,  
but she lies brazen yet beneath the sun,  
she has no honour and she has no fear.

# COMMENT

THE diseases of which great empires perish are no less evil than the lusts on which they rise. Complacency and apathy are as much to blame for what is happening to us as the ruthlessness and brutality by which they are opposed, and now that the harpoon is in the blubber, we can see how much the rage of Hitler has been engendered by the serenity of the man with the umbrella, the sloth of the man with the pipe.

The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices  
Make instruments to plague us.

To this extent the criticism of *Horizon* made by Goronv Rees is deserved. We have occupied our corner in the general fool's paradise, lulled by the general false security and considered the war as a burden, necessary but not intolerable, like income tax, which, after demanding an equal share from us all, would suddenly explode into victory. *Horizon* has viewed the war with mixed feelings, which since they are not uncommon, are worth mentioning. (1) Old fashioned anti-fascism; the feeling that there will be no place in the world for freedom and justice after a Hitler victory. (2) A deep distrust of the ruling class which was conducting the war in an atmosphere of selfishness and political ignorance, and which was more accustomed to betray than to lead. (3) A genuine horror of violence, and doubt whether any ends are justified by the ferocious lethality and efficacy of the means which war employs. (4) A strong desire to take advantage of the political truce by reasserting the standards of writing which make it an art, and not simply a means of propaganda or an exhibitional symptom; and (5) a belief that that art of writing was one of the highest expressions of the genius of England, France and America, and that to encourage and publish it was in itself a war activity; the same mood did the Spanish Republicans carry out their reforms in education over a shrinking territory.

However, it is clear that the labour of imagination necessary for creative writing, the freedom to print it, the backing to publish it, the leisure and curiosity to read it, depend

The last analysis on the British fleet, and now that that extraordinary fact has been brought home to us we cannot afford the airy detachment of earlier numbers. We have walked through the tiger house, speculating on the power and ferocity of the beasts, and looked up to find the cage-doors open.

This much is conceded to Goronwy Rees; that *Horizon* has both failed to take the war sufficiently seriously, having lived, along with a great many others, in that state of euphoria to which the defensive situation gave rise, and that its comments on the war have exhibited the predicament of many pacifist-minded people who yet see no way out except by violence. Moreover, while the conduct of the war was in the hands of those whose unimaginable blunders had led up to it, *Horizon* could not be wholeheartedly behind them. Having admitted the justice of Rees's criticism in the light of recent events (and this admission must also include an apology to Lord Beaverbrook, who said that there was no time for culture in this war, and was quite right—there is only time for culture in this war if there is a great deal more time for aeroplanes), *Horizon* yet disagrees with the nature of Rees's argument. 'The soldier fights and dies for the artist,' he says, 'the artist by repudiating the war repudiates the soldier and his sufferings, therefore he has betrayed the soldier and can expect no help or make no claim on society, which is made up of soldiers.' He quotes *Horizon*: 'The war is the enemy of creative activity, and writers and painters are wise to ignore it and to concentrate their talents on other subjects. Since they are politically impotent they can use this time to develop at deeper emotional levels, or to improve their weapons by technical experiment.' But the article went on to say, 'The artist and the intellectual are lucky to be alive. They must celebrate by creating more culture as fast as they can,' and it concluded with praise of T. S. Eliot, whose *East Coker* had just appeared. It is certain that Eliot is better employed writing *East Coker* than as a brother officer of Goronwy Rees, and as the great majority of artists and intellectuals are older than the classes who have so far been called up it still applies to them. And the fact remains that war is the enemy of creative activity, because the military

virtues are in conflict with the creative, and because it is impossible in wartime for most people to concentrate on the values of literature and art. The point which *Horizon* has made is that though this war is being fought for culture, the fighting of it will not create that culture. Cézanne was rejected in 1870 from the military authorities, he was, in fact, a deserter, nor would he have painted better had he fought, nor would his painting have achieved more had he perished. The best books during the last war were written by non-participants, and the best war-books appeared some years afterwards and were pacifist in tone. The soldier-artists of the type of Wilfred Owen or David Jones fought in the war while, 'at a deeper emotional level', they were producing pacifist art. This is less likely to happen to-day, indeed the whole distinction which Rees makes between soldiers and artists is one which will disappear, for eventually we shall all be fighting, and the conscript fathers of *Horizon* may be drafted to the dashing Rees's awkward squad. What we should concern us when we are all soldiers is what we are fighting for, and here those still outside the army can render valuable help to those within. In another Comment *Horizon* remarks that 'the technocracies of the future, the army and navy, the Cabinet, and when the war is over they will hardly allow themselves to be quietly deprived of their influence, and will be handed a gratuity, as before'. *Horizon* believes that the armies which defeat Hitler will be revolutionary armies, that the only thing which can defeat National Socialism is international socialism, and that though trained soldiers may die for the dividends of the rich and the comforts of the well-to-do, they will not win their victories for them. We are fighting for Capitalism, for Empire, for Culture, for Democracy, for Christianity—unless we only fight for the best of these things we are as decadent as our enemies think us. Our empire must be a democratic empire, our Christianity a spiritual force, our culture a living thing, our materialism within the reach of all, and our fat sweated off us. Instead of creating an opposition between soldier and artist, based on the meaning attached to 'ignoring the war', it would



etter if soldiers and those who will become soldiers demanded that their leaders should inspire them, and that none at the politically educated and intellectually adult should be entrusted with the conduct of it. Hitler is fifty years old, he combines enormous imagination and flexibility with a realist grasp of history. Whatever we may think of the objects of their revolution he and Mussolini are active revolutionaries. They cannot be successfully opposed by the old, the rich, and the rigid. Even Lord Haw-Haw talked to us as men, using a virile eighteenth-century irony, while our own B.B.C. coddled us like a Woolworth Father Christmas speaking through his beard. The colonels of the Panzer regiments give their orders from the air; such innovations are needed here. The War Office should consult those who fought in Spain, the Intelligence be deblimped, the Civil Service electrified, the dead hand altogether removed, or those who betrayed the Spaniards and the Czechs will find more than the Belgians ready to betray them. It is not a question of parties, but of enabling all the progressive forces of England to take control, and the born leaders to lead, and of relegating to obscurity those who have prepared Hitler, Mussolini and Franco, and not prepared anything else. Each country gets the Fifth Column it deserves; had we interned in time our Elder Statesmen, we would not be locking up our Fascists to-day.

With best wishes to Goronwy Rees.

## SELECTED NOTICES

*East End My Cradle*, by Willy Goldman. Faber & Faber. 8/6. The author of this book was born in the Jewish quarter of Stepney at a time (shortly before the last war) when anti-Semitism was only active among children. A Jew from Whitechapel who ventured into Wapping might possibly get his head broken, but there were no organized invasions in the Mosley model. Also—rather an interesting point—local patriotism cut across race-feeling and Gentile districts took a pride in their Jewish boxers and footballers. The Mass

Observers would do a useful job of work if they could determine whether or not anti-Semitism seriously exists in England. One is constantly coming across what seem to be evidences of it, but it is probably significant that the 'Jew joke' disappeared very suddenly from popular art (comic postcards, for instance) after Hitler came to power.

The picture of East-End Jewish society that Mr. Goldman gives is of something in decay spiritually but not morally. Religious belief, apparently, is on the wane. No one is orthodox any longer, except the rabbis and to a small extent the women. On the other hand, the stuffy, circumscribed Jewish life, with its tradition of endless work and endless childbearing, goes on much as before. Jews, apparently, are on the whole more timid, 'respectable' and family-ridden than Gentiles. The conditions in the specific Jewish trades, such as the cheap tailoring trade, are appalling, especially for the girls of very poor families, who have no dowries to look forward to. With the long hours and bad air of the sweat-shop the Jewish girl's oriental bloom fades rapidly, and at twenty-five she is almost unmarriageable; on the other hand, if she loses her virginity her last chance is gone. Before thirty the girls who fail to marry have turned into withered, ailing drudges, horribly bullied by the male employees, who are sexually unsatisfied themselves and give a sadistic kick out of talking obscenely in front of the women.

For one working-class intellectual, like Mr. Goldman, who manages by desperate struggles to win a place for himself and do the work that interests him, how many are simply squeezed to death by a society that has no use for them? Mr. Goldman records several. The girl he is in love with, gifted much above the average, dies at sixteen, of tuberculosis, in circumstances of terrible squalor, and his friend Wise, who is trying to be a painter, dies at twenty of loneliness, discouragement, exposure and simple hunger. One gets the impression of countless young lives wasted in the same way. And it is a frightful thought that now, in 1940, an anarchic capitalist society which lets people die of neglect like forgotten animals is actually less cruel than the existing alternatives.



*The Backward Son*. Stephen Spender. Hogarth Press. 7/6. Mr. Spender has adopted a consistent policy of publishing piecemeal, and leaving the selection to time and posterity. This being understood, his reputation could have sustained much worse novel than *The Backward Son*. It is, in fact, not a bad novel at all. The whole is not quite homogeneous, however, and the final impression is a little blurred by this diversity of style, and attitude.

The formula for making any human being appear loveable and justified, by putting the reader inside his skin, and viewing the rest of the world from the standpoint of his ego, has produced a deplorable category of the novel; easy to produce, because the author is so often, in part at least, his own hero (and yet without assuming the responsibility of omniscience), and no social or moral standpoint—such as that of Zola—is obligatory. Sympathy is all. Mr. Spender certainly gives us Geoffrey Brand as the centre, with a less vital circumference of characters as Geoffrey saw them, some life-size, some lay-figures. Certainly also, the reader is convinced of the ungainly, unpopular boy, backward in self-defence, obscure pupil of a second-rate prep-school, is really loveable and inevitable. Mr. Spender, however, has a Pauline honesty about the true nature of the human ego that amounts to judgment—sometimes almost to condemnation—of his hero, who is really the self-loving self. He sees body and soul in conflict, and the continual shortcoming of the will to be and do good and avoid evil. For this moral effort was Geoffrey's preoccupation, and presented with the conflicting standards of home, schoolmates and schoolmasters, none of them in themselves quite good enough to carry real conviction of truth, he lost his nerve. Failing in spite of conscientious efforts to conform to these standards, Geoffrey, not clever, nor beautiful, nor even ordinary, meditates: 'Unless I am great, what else am I?' This is profound, and poetic. For this is surely the key question that only the great can answer and abolish. Here again one sees Mr. Spender asserting his adherence to the Spiritual view of life, again in the Pauline tradition, seeing the redeeming aspect of the unpalatable truth of original sin, the key to the edifice of human

greatness that has been built upon imperfect, even sorrowful human nature.

Amongst the secondary characters, some appear imposing architecture, large in the foreground of a photograph of something else. Thus Geoffrey's parents remain unconvincing. Other characters, like the headmaster, Mr. Leather, and some of the boys, are witty cartoons. There are some really funny passages in this vein of caricature—a description of Mr. Spender that many of his readers will not have previously suspected. One subsidiary character, the naïf, like, humble schoolmistress, Miss Higgins, has been drawn with insight and subtlety.

Mr. Spender is of his generation in finding in the age of innocence a period of prime interest. Posterity may decide that innocence, at the price of maturity, is no better a bargain than Satanic greatness—siding with Freud against the analyst, who might be any of us. Mr. Spender seems to stand half way, for if he loves Geoffrey's childhood, he does not find it free from evil, any more than facts bore out the fiction of the Noble Savage, the escapist formula of some earlier romantic writers. He is further justified in writing about childhood, by an exceptionally clear perception of the natural characteristics of small boys, their trains and stamp collections, and social behaviour. It is no detraction from the merit of *The Backward Son* to add that schoolboys might enjoy it as a school story.

Neither his treatment of character nor of prose style suggests that Mr. Spender is likely to prove—as publishers gamble on young poets doing—a professional novelist. The chief interest of this book is in Mr. Spender's development of the sensibility to moral issues that is revealed in his analysis of Geoffrey's bewilderments. In spite of occasional free use of imagery, that are incidental ('the group . . . consisted of half a dozen little boys looking like unwritten sheets of paper, or lumps of frozen meat, or even sainted cherubs'), there is no way in which one can say that it is evidently the novel of a poet. It may be that Mr. Spender, in his maturity, will be pre-eminently a moralist, in whatever medium.

KATHLEEN RAIN